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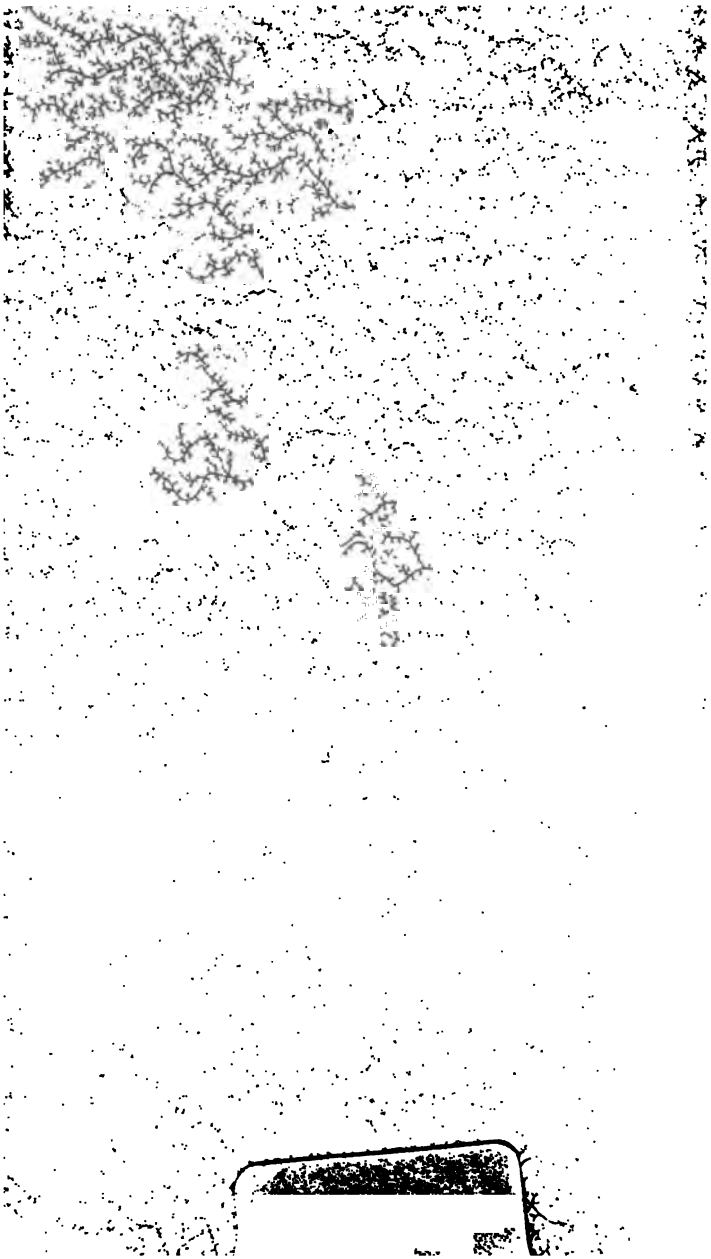

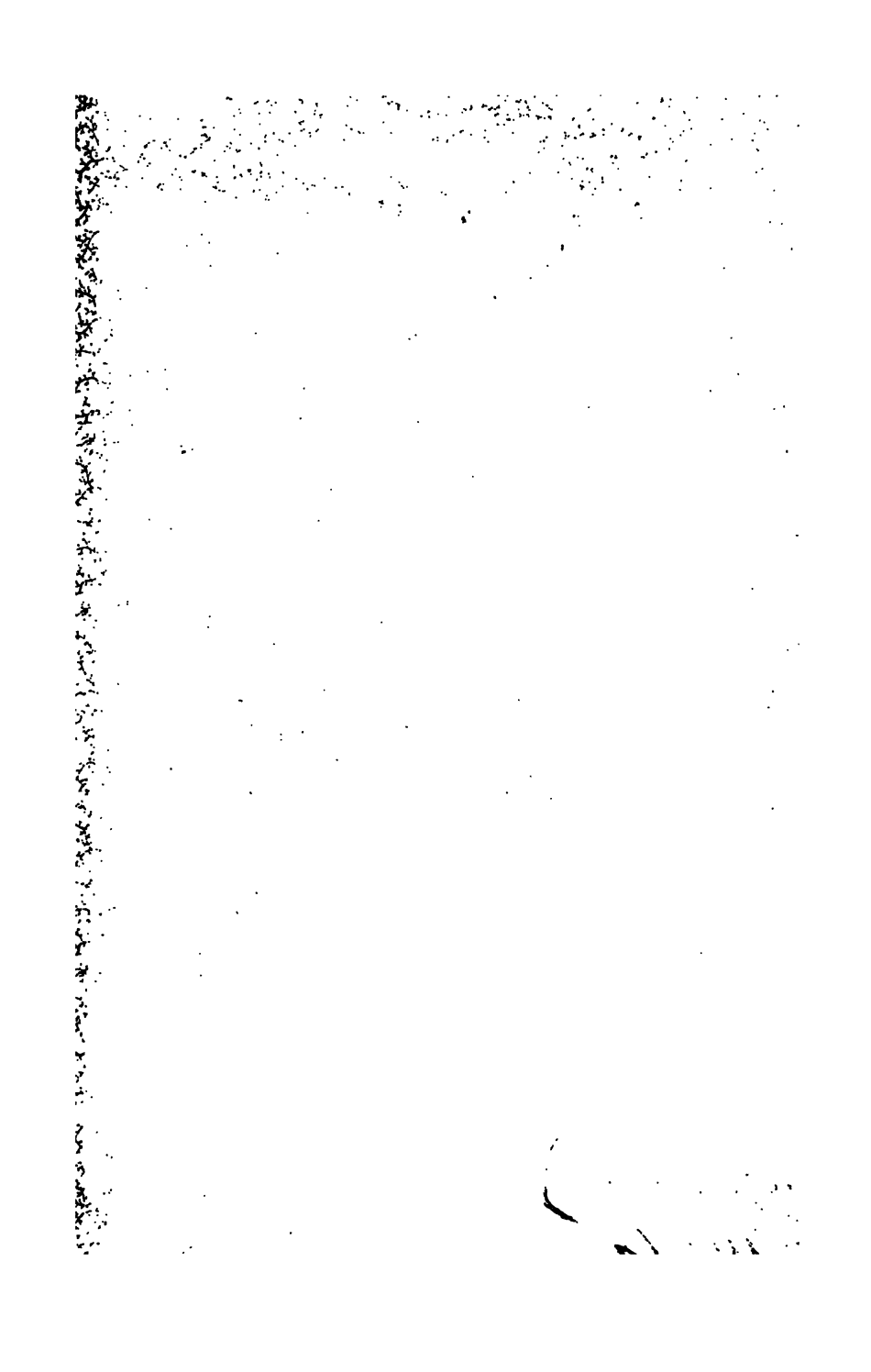

CARLINGTON CASTLE:

A Tale of the Jesuits.

BY

Mrs. C. G. H.

AUTHOR OF "THE CURATE OF LINWOOD," "AMY HARRINGTON," "NORMAN LESLIE," ETC.

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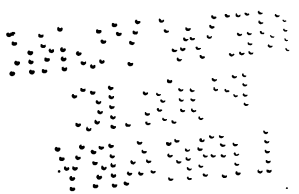

TO

MY MOTHER,

AS A MARK OF DEEP RESPECT AND GRATITUDE,

This Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY

C. G. H.

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PREFACE.

The circumstances upon which the following Tale is founded, occurred in our own day, and within the British dominions.

There are those who believe that religious persecution passed away with the dark ages in which it took its rise, and that castle-prisoned heroines, and inquisitorial plots belong only to the regions of romance. Let such remember, that the heart of man is not changed since the days when it was pronounced to be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and that the "dark places of the world, whether this darkness reigns unbroken in pagan Hindoostan, or broods in portentous gloom over districts of enlightened Europe, are still "full of the habitations of cruelty."

The "Story of Peace" has been proclaimed on earth; and He whose mission is "to comfort all that mourn," has declared Himself the "Immanuel" of this sin-alienated world; but there are still wretched spots in His wide dominions which refuse to submit to His reign, and have ruthlessly plucked up by the roots the olive-branch planted by His hand. There, where

Truth is rejected, Mercy's embrace is unknown—where Righteousness is despised, Peace sheds not the halo of her smile.

The circumstances, localities, and names of the following Tale have been sufficiently disguised to prevent the possibility of individualising them. Dora, Sir Eustace, and Father Adrien, have their prototypes in real life. The leading circumstances of her history, with exception of the alterations already referred to, are strictly true. The other characters and events of the book are fictitious.

May the following pages, by the blessing of Him "without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy," awaken in the minds of parents and guardians of youth, an increased sense of the awful importance of their trust, and the fearful consequences that may follow its non-fulfilment. Abundant facts could be brought to prove that in our day "the Mystery of Iniquity doth already work," and that not merely in enlarging its kingdom, openly and professedly, but in borrowing the garb of Truth, and disguising itself alternately as the pastor, the teacher, the servant, or the friend.

And may those who, like Dora, have suffered trials so lengthened and severe, that heart and flesh have almost failed, be encouraged still to wait upon Him who hath given the promise both for this life and for that which is to come, believing that a steadfast adherence to the truth, a firm trust, and lively faith, will assuredly obtain the recompence; "For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord: thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give unto you an expected end."

CARLINGTON CASTLE:

A TALE OF THE JESUITS.

CHAPTER I.

"Zu der Heimath möcht ich wieder."—*German Melody.*

"FAREWELL," my child," said the aged Abbess of St. Cloud, as she concluded an exordium of some length on the dangers of the world, to which her youthful charge had listened with patient attention; "may the scenes upon which you are entering wear for you only the fairy colors that your fancy paints; but if you should ever want a shelter from the storms of life, return here—and, though now you forsake her arms, the Holy Church will welcome you as a repentant child."

She kissed the fair brow of the *pensionnaire*, pronounced a blessing on her head, and Dora Mowbray rose and retired. She hastened to the garden: there, under the shade of a spreading acacia, for the last four years, she had found a quiet retreat, where she could cherish undisturbed bright dreams of the future.

She looked around, and, as she gazed for the last time on each familiar object, the sad thought that she was bidding adieu for ever, not to these only, but to the friends and companions of her early days, almost overpowered her, and, for a little

while, she felt disposed to retract her determination, and seclude herself for life within the sanctuary of this her peaceful home.

Dora Mowbray was the only child of an Irish-Roman Catholic. She had been left an orphan from her earliest years, and educated until the age of fourteen by her grandmother, who indulged every whim of the capricious child. Nature, however, had gifted her with a disposition so generous and affectionate, that even such a training could not spoil it; and the only result of the discipline—or rather want of discipline—of her early life, was an independence of thought and action rarely to be met with in one of her age. Her first grief was the death of her grandmother. She was then left to the guardianship of her paternal uncle—a priest, who had resided in the Castle ever since she was born, and took the pastoral charge of the surrounding district.

As soon as matters could be arranged, Dora was conveyed by Mr. Mowbray to the convent of St. Cloud, to complete her education. Her gaiety and sweet disposition won the favor of the sisterhood, and the affection of her companions. It would be uncharitable to suppose that the nuns were actuated in their kindness to her by visions of future aggrandizement to their convent; yet is it too much to say, that such calculations were not left altogether out of mind? That she might devote herself to the cloister, was her uncle's secret design; but for the first two years of her residence at St. Cloud, he preserved silence on the subject of his hopes—during the last two, he had often added the weight of his counsels to the influence of the nuns; but the high spirit and glowing fancy of Dora afforded him so faint a prospect of success, that he dared not mention his wish. He would willingly have prolonged the period of her convent life, but she had completed her eighteenth year—the period at which her father's will fixed her majority, and her return home must now be determined by her own choice. As a last hope, he painted in glowing colors the holy calm of a convent life, and placed in strong contrast the turmoil of conflicting passions to

which she would be exposed by her return to the world; but the negative his proposal met with was so decided, that for a moment he forgot the calm policy that usually guided him, and was betrayed into a violence of manner, that aroused both the pride and resentment of his niece.

"You forget, uncle," she said, haughtily, "that I shall soon be of age, and that duty to myself, and those who depend upon me, require that I should assume that place in society God has given me. For one other month you have power to keep me here; when it has expired, I intend to return to Ireland."

Mr. Mowbray saw that he had gone too far, and immediately assumed his accustomed mildness; but as he looked on the glowing eye of his youthful charge, he mentally resolved that her haughty spirit should be brought low

"Ere many years have passed, Dora," he murmured, as he left the room, "you will be glad to seek a refuge within those walls from which now you hasten to fly."

The sound of the vesper bell recalled Dora from the bright visions that had gradually taken the place of her mournful retrospections, and she hastened to the chapel. As the solemn notes of the organ, and the sweet voices of the nuns, rose upon her ear, her heart melted; and had her uncle been there, with his smooth words and insidious reasonings, on that night he might have obtained his long-desired end, and the course of Dora's life been changed. But the moment of excitement passed—the strong tide of feeling which rolled in an opposite direction resumed its sway; and though with many tears, on the following morning, she bade adieu to the kind friends and companions she was leaving, they were soon dried; and, ere the first day of her journey was over, a new-born sense of freedom and gladness filled her spirit, as they rapidly hastened along the vine-covered plains of France.

Mr. Mowbray wished to obliterate from her mind the recollection that he had urged her to follow any other than her present course, and the irresistible fascination which was felt

by all who came within the sphere of his influence, was exercised so successfully towards his niece, that his society gave a fresh zest to the varied enjoyments opening before her.

After the travellers had landed in Ireland, an easy journey through the beautiful scenery of the south, brought Dora in sight of her home. She had retained a vivid recollection of the scene, yet she was hardly prepared for the magnificent landscape that opened before her.

Carlington Castle stood on the declivity of a wooded hill. It was an ancient edifice built on a jutting crag, round the base of which rushed a mountain torrent, that gradually widened into a river, as it flowed through the park, until, at no great distance from the Castle, it mingled its waters with the sea.

The sun was setting as Dora and her uncle approached the gate.

"Is this my home!" she murmured, while a gush of mingled feeling overflowed her heart. The image of her grandmother arose before her, and she wept to think that she was not there to welcome the return of her child.

At this moment a sudden turn of the road brought them within sight of a multitude of people assembled to watch for their approach, and Dora's thoughts were interrupted by shouts of delight and enthusiastic greetings. The air resounded with exclamations of "Long life to yer ladyship!" "Blessings on her beautiful face!" "Ye're welcome back to reign over us."

For some time it was impossible to advance; nor was it until the priest reminded them that the lady had had a long journey and they must now suffer her to get quickly home, that a way was opened for the carriage.

"'Tis true for you, yer rivirence," they exclaimed. "On wid ye, boys, to the castle! Hurrah!" But the clamor reached its height when the procession arrived at the gates of the Castle. The portals of the old oak hall stood open, and a few of the elder domestics waited on the steps, while the rest were arranged in the hall.

"Make way wid yees, will ye not? Didn't I nurse her father?—soft be his bed!" exclaimed an old woman, as she pushed her way through the crowd. "And have my ould eyes lived to see you again, mavourneen?" she exclaimed, as she threw her arms around Dora, and, seizing her hand, covered it with kisses. "Blessin's on ye, acushla machree! Sure this is all I prayed for sin' ye went to furrin parts; and the Virgin has heard my prayer—her blessin' be about you, dear!" Tears streamed down her aged cheeks as she spoke. Her ardent welcome went straight to Dora's heart, and, raising the old woman from the ground, she clasped her in her arms, and heartily returned her salute. Deafening shouts of applause rent the air; but, as she turned to acknowledge them, her arm was touched by the priest, and, taking her hand, he directed her attention to a lady who was descending the steps. Dora did not, at that moment, inquire why it was that the sight of this personage caused her involuntarily to retain nurse's hand with a closer pressure, and threw a sudden chill over her excited feelings. Her sensations, however, appeared not unshared by the crowd, for the hurrahs and shoutings sank into whispered murmurs so low, that the rustling of the good lady's stiff black satin was distinctly audible as she advanced. Her uncle had, a few days before, told her that this relative had promised to make Carlington her home while the youth of her niece should render such matronage desirable, and the recollection now brought a feeling somewhat resembling that with which she used to hear the stately *mère* assistant announce that the hour of recreation was over. She received and returned the old lady's advances, however, with what grace she could, and, accepting the offered arm of the priest, entered the hall, recognizing as she passed some of the domestics whose faces she remembered.

She could hardly wait to partake of the refreshment to which her grand-aunt invited her, before she ranged over the house, and revisited every familiar corner, and saw all the improvements effected since she had left it. Her aunt accompanied her

as far as the second story, but left her there, whilst, with nurse, she explored every recess of the old castle, and mounted the battlements; but she had only for a few moments enjoyed the beauty of the scene, when a message was brought from her aunt, begging her to come down to the drawing-room, as the evening was too far advanced for her to remain in the open air. Dora had never dreamt that it was possible to catch cold at any hour of the night, and she reluctantly turned from watching the moon rise over "Cormack's Tower"—an old ruin on the boundary of the park, regarding which nurse had just been relating a ghostly legend.

"Was I not fit to be trusted with the care of my own child?" muttered the old woman, as she followed her down stairs.

"Come away, my dear," said her aunt, as she entered the drawing-room. "You had better have waited till the morning, before you exposed yourself to the air. You must have some gruel before you go to bed, to prevent your taking cold."

"Oh no, aunt! I never take cold," answered Dora, carelessly. "I long to visit with you to-morrow, uncle, some of the beautiful spots I have been looking at to-night."

"I think Mr. Mowbray will agree with me, that it would be well to rest for a few days," said Miss Beauford.

Dora looked annoyed. She felt as if an invisible chain were winding itself around her, and she was grateful when the priest saved her the necessity of replying.

She was fatigued, and not unwillingly complied with her aunt's request, that she would retire early to bed.

An undefined sense of relief came over her when she felt she was alone; but she had not long enjoyed her solitude, ere she was disturbed by a knock at the door, quickly followed by the entrance of nurse.

"Oh, nurse, I am glad it is you!" she exclaimed.

"And who else should it be, acushla, but yer ould nurse come to pillow your head, now ye're back in yer father's halls. Come, darlin', and see here;" and she took Dora's hand, and

led her to the window. The moon had gone down, and it was now dark, but the light of bonfires blazed on every mountain height. "See the rejoicin' to get you back again, dear; an' well they may. His rivirence has been kind and good, but he wasn't always here, and thim furriners wish no good to ould Ireland; but never mind them, dear—it's yerself that's the rightful lady here, and there's not one in the land but would run night and day to do yer biddin'."

"But what do you mean, nurse?" asked Dora, with a perplexed air; "who am I not to mind?"

"Nothin', nothin'," replied nurse; "only never heed them that throuble ye."

At this moment another summons was heard at the door, and nurse hastened to answer it. Dora heard an English accent deliver a request from Miss Beauford, that her niece would drink the basin of gruel, and go quickly to bed.

"Tell your lady that Miss Mowbray is just agoin," said nurse, as she took the basin, and closed the door.

"Who is that, nurse?"

"It is Mrs. Harris, Miss Beauford's English maid, my lady." Nurse said no more, but a certain intonation in her voice showed Dora that Mrs. Harris was no favorite. She did not, however, pursue the subject, but changed it by making inquiries for some of her old friends, whom she had not recognized among the servants in the hall. Most of them, she learned, had married, and settled on the estate; and before nurse left her, she had revived her recollections of all but the most remote portions of the property, and made acquaintance, at least by name, with most of the tenants.

"May the saints be about yer bed, my darlin'," said nurse, as she drew her curtains; "will I not bring ye something better than that washy stuff?"

"No, thank you, nurse, I do not want anything to-night; come to me early in the morning."

All was now quiet around; but Dora felt no inclination to

sleep. She drew back the curtains which nurse had closely drawn, and from the deep recessed window opposite, gazed upon the paling bonfires, and the dark trees waving in the low night wind. Many thoughts crowded upon her mind—remembrances of her childish days, and her beloved grandmother, whom she almost fancied near her, blended with a glow of grateful affection towards the warm-hearted people to whom she had returned. For some time she pleased her fancy, by picturing all the good she would do amongst them. Gradually visions of smiling cottages and happy faces assumed a more dreamlike character, and audible blessings seemed to breathe around her as she fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

"O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be:
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist;
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
* * * * *
Life and life's effluence closed, as once a shower."

COLERIDGE.

At an early hour next morning, Dora was awakened by the bright sunbeams shining into her room. She rose, and throwing open the window, gazed out, enchanted with the beauty of the scene, and was on the lawn whilst it was yet wet with the morning dew. She passed through the flower-garden into a path that skirted a wood, and rambled on, gathering wild flowers as she went, and carrolling snatches of her native songs. She was too happy for serious thought of any kind; an exuberant sense of joy overflowed her heart, and life seemed to open before her an unclouded vista of brightness. Yet in the midst of her wild glee, she longed for some living thing to share in it. Had a friend been near, or even a dog, from whom she might catch some echo of her gladness! At this moment she was startled by the sound of an approaching footstep; and a quick rustling among the underwood was followed by the appearance of a beautiful spaniel. He stopped short, and, fixing his bright black eyes for a moment on her, uttered a short bark of joy, and bounded towards her. "Fidèle, my own dog!" she exclaimed,

clasping her arms round the neck of her favorite, whilst he tried to lick her face and hands, uttering all the while a low whine of delight.

As Dora rose from the ground, Lanty, nurse's grandson, emerged from the wood.

"How are you, Lanty?" she said, shaking hands warmly with her old friend.

"I'm well, thanks to yer ladyship; and much the better for seeing ye back, ma'am, asthore———"

"And I'm glad to be amongst you, Lanty. But where has Fidèle come from? My uncle told me he was lost."

"And so he was, plase yer honorable ladyship; and a weary search it was that myself and Rory Macormach had for him, the crathur; for he had been away three days, and we had all as one given him up for dead. And so it was getting purty late on the third day, and we were passing by the Banshee's Crag, that yer ladyship will remimber down by the shore. There had been gypsies in it a little afore; but it was quiet enough then. Says I, 'Will ye step in here for a moment, Rory, boy,' says I, 'to shun the shower that's coming over Clock-na-ben just now,' for it had been thundering all the afternoon. So we crept into a far corner, and I took out my flask wid a drop of the crathur, by your lave, for we'd had a long day's thravel, and just then I heard a low moanin' in a corner, and I thought I knowed the voice; so 'Fiddle,' says I; and then I heard it again, and whin I had moved some straw, there was the poor baste in the corner, and sadly ill-treated he'd been. We thought, yer ladyship, the gipsies had stolen him, but how he got hurt as he did, I niver could guess; anyhow, Rory an' me wrapped him up, and carried him home, and my gran'mother looked after him, lady, as if he were a Christian. He got well in a few days, wid good treatment, an' he's followed me, the crathur, iver since. But arrah, now, isn't there nathur in the dumb baste? see how he knowed your ladyship at oncet."

"Try if he will follow me, Lanty," said Dora; "call him back."

She walked on without taking any notice of the dog. He looked wistfully for a moment, and then bounded after her. Lanty called him, but Fidèle only turned, and, wagging his tail, as if apologizing for leaving his kind master, hastened after Dora."

"Good luck to you, thin, my fine fellow!" said Lanty. "It's the sowl of an Irishman that's in him. He knows his duty, the baste; bad cess to them that 'ud turn from a lady, let alone her asking thim to follow her."

He made his lowest bow, and departed, while Dora and Fidèle pursued their way together. They were some distance from home when the gong sounded for breakfast. Dora was returning by what appeared a shorter path, when she found the way closed up. No gate was visible; so, mounting the fence, she leaped easily to the ground on the opposite side, and was suddenly confronted by Mrs. Harris.

"Miss Beauford desired me to say she is waiting breakfast for you, ma'am."

Dora hastened on, and in a few moments reached the door of the Castle, where Mr. Mowbray met her, and, bidding her "Good morning!" in his blandest manner, led her into the breakfast room. Miss Beauford was there, dressed in her stiffest satin, and wearing her stateliest aspect.

"Good morning, Miss Mowbray!" she said, in a tone that threw a sudden damp over Dora's gay spirits. "I hope you have had a pleasant ramble? A long one, at least, it has been, as Harris tells me you have been out since daybreak. It was not very customary for young ladies in my day to roam over the country alone before breakfast, and be absent from morning prayers."

"Dora did not know the hour of prayers," said Mr. Mowbray, mildly; "she will have learnt it by to-morrow."

Dora's look thanked him for this timely interference. "I

thought I did hear a bell while I was on the shore," she said "I will remember the hour in future."

I am sure you will set an example to your tenants of the strict observance of God's worship, in which you have been educated," said the priest; "but now, I am sure, you must be hungry."

Equanimity was restored, but alas! it was of short duration. Fidèle burst into the room, dripping with a recent plunge in the sea. He rushed towards his mistress, but stopping as he passed Miss Beauford's chair, shook himself so heartily, that a shower of briny drops fell on the satin gown.

"Upon my word, this is too much!" exclaimed the wrathful lady, rising with heightened color from her chair. "Pray ring the bell, Mr. Mowbray. What insufferable carelessness to suffer the dog to escape from the kennel!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Dora, hastily. "He must not be sent to the kennel. Down, Fidèle, down, sir! I am very sorry, aunt, that he has behaved so ill. He must be taught better manners for the future."

"Oh! he is your dog, Miss Mowbray? I was not aware of that; I think it might be possible to find a more lady-like pet than that great setter."

He is a beautiful dog—a true King Charles," said Dora; but before the question of Fidèle's merits could be further discussed, Mr. Mowbray wisely interposed.

"Where did you find him?" he inquired. "Lanty told me he was lost before I left Ireland last autumn."

"I met him with Lanty this morning. He thinks he must have been stolen by the gipsies; but he and Rory Macormach found him half dead in the old barn on the sea-shore."

Miss Beauford assumed her most dignified demeanor, but for the present made no further remark. For some time the conversation was carried on exclusively between Dora and the priest; at last the good lady condescended to show some inter-

est in the subject, and asked a few questions relating to her convent life.

"The Abbess must have been a very sensible person," said she at last, "though she allows many indulgences unknown in the convent where I was educated. We were not allowed to speak except during the hours of recreation; and, in many other ways, a wholesome discipline was maintained, in which the Abbess of St. Cloud appears to have been rather deficient."

"The rules for the nuns were very strict," said Dora; "but I believe the Abbess thought it unnecessary for those whose vocation was the world to observe regulations so rigid."

"None more highly than the young need self-discipline and restraint," said the venerable lady. "Well would it have been, Miss Mowbray, had the holy instructions you have received led to your choice of a religious life; that is the highest distinction to which you could have aspired."

"No, no," said Dora, playfully, as she rose from the table; "I love the free hills too well ever to be shut up like a caged bird." She walked to the window, and sang a few lines of the song, "I won't be a nun."

Her aunt appeared greatly shocked by her levity.

"If you must sing such vain songs, Miss Mowbray," she said, "let me beg that it may at least not be in my presence."

Dora looked surprised; a glow of impatient feeling rushed to her fair cheek, but she repressed the passing irritation.

"What can have become of the post-bag?" said Mr. Mowbray; "surely the letters are very late."

At this moment the bag was brought in, and the little party were soon busy with its contents.

"May I look at these?" said Miss Beauford, taking up one of a packet addressed to Dora.

"I will read some of them to you," she replied; "the rest are private."

"I never heard of a young lady having anything private from her natural guardians," said Miss Beauford, drawing herself up

in her most stately manner. "I must say, I cannot consent such concealments. All manner of improprieties may be carri on, while no one has power to control them. I am sure M Mowbray cannot approve of such proceedings."

"I certainly cannot approve of insubordination towar those who are set over you," replied Mr. Mowbray.

"Surely it is no infringement of duty," said Dora, indignantl "to preserve sacred the confidence of friends. There are son things into which I can never suffer intrusion."

The priest's brow lowered.

"It is well," he said, "for the self-willed spirits that wou hasten to their own destruction, that the Church has impose upon such the duty of confession."

He left the room as he spoke, and Miss Beauford held ou her hand as if to receive the letters.

"I have told you already, aunt," said Dora, "these lette are private, and the betrayal of confidence is a sin I shall neve have to confess."

She rose, and, hastening to her room, placed the contested letters in her writing-desk, and sat down to calm the agitatio which the scene just passed had aroused. She felt little inclina tion to return to her aunt's society, and spent some hours alone The beauty of the day at last tempted her out; and she wa sitting on the stone steps of a terrace that descended by flight of steps into a dingle, and forming the plan of a new flower garden on the smooth slope of the velvet turf, when she wa summoned to luncheon. Determined not to be too late a second time, she hastily entered the house, and found Miss Beaufort alone.

The meal passed almost in silence, notwithstanding Dora's repeated efforts to restore a state of harmony. Anger was with her an evanescent feeling, and the natural sweetness of her dis position disposed her to be on happy terms with those among whom she lived. Her efforts, however, for the present were vain.

"What are your plans for the afternoon?" she said, as they rose. "Shall we drive, or would you prefer walking?"

"I do not intend to go out to-day," said her aunt, stiffly.

"Do you not? Shall we, then, spend a quiet afternoon?"

"I am occupied in my room to-day; but if you wish to walk beyond the garden, Mrs. Harris will accompany you."

"No, thank you, I will ride," said Dora; and ringing the bell, she ordered her horse, before Miss Beauford had time to interpose.

"I am astonished, Miss Mowbray," she exclaimed, "to hear you make such a proposal, to ride over the country, with only a wild Irish groom to attend you. Really, if such are your ideas of propriety, I think there is much need that your actions be under the control of some one whose judgment is more sound than your own!"

This was going too far. Dora turned, as she was about to leave the room; and, drawing up her slight figure to its full height, she said, with a quiet dignity that would have silenced almost any one—

"My dear aunt, I am fully sensible of your kindness in coming to live with me, and it is my wish that you should find this a happy home; but to-day, at the beginning of our life together, let us fully understand each other. For the next four days, my actions, by law, must be subject to the will of my guardians, but to no one else. After that time, I shall be uncontrolled mistress of my conduct, and by every one must be treated as such."

She left the room without waiting for a reply.

As she crossed the hall, she heard the sound of retiring carriage-wheels, and was met by a servant with cards.

"Why were they not admitted?" she inquired, looking at the names.

"Because they are a Protestant family, my lady; and his rivirence tould me only to admit those of the thrue Church."

"Let every one be admitted, O'Brien, unless *I* give orders the contrary," she said.

"Well, shure, this is a bother I'm in," said the man when was out of hearing. I wouldn't go agin her ladyship at rate; and shure it's my mistress she is. But thin there's t Praste. Oh! well, I'll just be after telling his rivirence forgot; shure ids no fault of mine to be throubled wid a b mimory, or maybe sometimes I didn't know whether they we of the thrue faith or not."

Dora mounted the spirited young horse Lanty had be training for her, and, followed by her attendant, cantered ov the smooth grassy slopes. She felt as if escaped into new li and liberty, and prolonged her ride till near the dinner hou Her spirits were invigorated: and she descended to the dra ing-room, full of hope that a few days and a little decisio would terminate her present annoyances.

CHAPTER III.

Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
Her beauty hangs upon the brow of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;
Beauty too rich for use—for earth too dear!

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE long-expected period arrived at last, and Dora opened her eyes on the day that gave her independence. There was somewhat, perhaps, of proud exultation in her heart, as she gazed from her window over the wide scene, reposing in the soft light of the early dawn, which henceforth was to own no rule but hers, but there was more of a strong, loving nature's desire untrammelled to fulfil its vocation; and her heart swelled at the thought of the happiness it would now be in her power to confer on that grateful and devoted people. Dora had ere now received visits from nearly all the neighboring families, and returned some of them. She was not, however, aware, that, in despite of her commands, and notwithstanding all O'Brien's convenient failures of memory, several of their Protestant neighbors had been excluded, and the very names she would least have wished, omitted in the list of invitations to the *fête* with which her birthday was to be celebrated. The morning was brilliant, the air soft and warm, and Dora's heart, revelling in the consciousness of a liberty her late annoyances had rendered more valuable, and radiant with anticipations of future happiness, was unclouded as the sky above her. The guests arrived early. Dora welcomed many of them in the park, where the

festivities had already begun ; and the greater part of the morning was spent in wandering from one gay group to another, listening to the national melodies, and watching the merry dances of the peasantry. Wherever Dora appeared, she was hailed with acclamations ; and shouts of "Long live your ladyship !" "Many happy days may ye see !" "Great be yer honor and glory !" echoed around her.

Late in the afternoon, a carriage drove up. Two ladies and a gentleman alighted from it, and were introduced to Dora by Mr. Mowbray, as Sir Eustace, Lady, and Miss Fitzgerald. She was too much interested by the appearance of the group, to observe the scowl upon the brow of the priest ; but she could not avoid remarking it, as Lady Fitzgerald regretted having missed her when she had called a few days before.

"I did not know of your visit," she said ; "how careless you must have thought me."

"Nay," replied Lady Fitzgerald, "I only regret that we have not sooner enjoyed the pleasure of meeting you ; but I trust we shall often see you at Ballyrowan. Indeed, I must prefer my claim, as a relation, to an early visit."

"A relation !" said Dora, involuntarily ; then suddenly checked herself, from a mingled feeling of surprise at her own ignorance of this, and dread of giving pain by acknowledging it. But Lady Fitzgerald's quick eye had already marked her embarrassment, and but too easily divined the cause.

"You did not know how near a kindred I claim, Miss Mowbray," she said, while an expression of sadness crossed her features. "I am the sister of your mother, by a former marriage ; but, whilst still young, I embraced the Reformed Faith, and since that hour I have been an alien to my father's house."

"And are you, then, my aunt?" exclaimed Dora, while she gazed with delight on the noble form and lovely countenance of the relative thus unexpectedly discovered. "Thank Heaven, that at last we have met ! Henceforth we shall no longer be strangers."

Lady Fitzgerald was moved. "How you resemble your mother, Dora! I could fancy that I once more hear and see her. I must indeed love you for her sake."

They passed, as she spoke, into a wood that skirted the park; and for a time Dora forgot that any one else in the world claimed her attention.

"Shall we return to your guests?" said Lady Fitzgerald, at length; "they will complain of your absence."

"I suppose we must," replied Dora, reluctantly; "but we shall enjoy many quiet days together, I trust; and you will tell me of your early days, and my dear mother."

As they returned to the park, they were met by Mr. Mowbray.

"I have been searching for you, Miss Mowbray," he said, coldly; "your absence at such a time appears somewhat neglectful of your friends."

"I have not been very long absent, uncle, and I hope my friends have been enjoying themselves in meanwhile"—"as much as I have done," she would have added, but, as she looked up, the dark scowl of the priest's brow checked her, and she silently passed on. With instinctive quickness she read her uncle's dislike of her Protestant relations, and his dread of her forming any intimacy with them; but the attraction of Lady Fitzgerald's society, linked, too, as it was, with the memory of her mother, was rapidly acquiring a power that would not easily be overcome.

The day passed gaily on. About noon, tables were spread beneath the trees; and as Dora, still accompanied by her new friends, passed from one group to another, her health was drunk again and again, with many a good wish from the warm Irish hearts around her.

"Who's that, Mrs. O'Sullivan?" said an old woman to nurse, who, in virtue of her office, was presiding at one of the tables.

"Whist wid ye," said nurse; "will ye ever larn manners; isn't the gentles widin hearing of yees?"

it. "There's a weight on my heart, nurse," she said, "when I look at that poor wounded thing, as if it were like what I should one day be. Tell me, nurse, will you never forsake your bird, if she should be wounded like it that lies trembling there?"

"Is it the sowl in my body I'd be forgittin' to think of? Shure it's that I'd be doin', before the light of heaven could come between you and yer ould nurse, my blessed child! But don't be spakin' of misfortin' that way, my dear. Shure the prayers of them that's away, and holy Mary and the saints are betune you and harm. And didn't I, cuishla machree, walk a station for yees when ye were beyant the seas? But come, lady, darlint, put away yer sorrowful thoughts, and put on yer beautiful dress; it will make my jewel look like a queen—a queen of hearts, as ye are, to be sure. The company below stairs will be thinkin' long for yees, dear."

Dora was soon ready. When dressed in rose-colored crape over white satin, and wreathed pearls in her glossy ringlets, nurse clasped her hands, and gazed in an ecstasy of joy.

"Blessin's on ye, lady of the world! Was ever the like seen since the Queen of Sheba?"

There were others as rapturous, though not so loud in their admiration, as nurse.

"How lovely she looks!" whispered Lady Fitzgerald to her daughter, as she entered the room. "You cannot remember your aunt; but, oh! she is her very image."

That evening was perhaps the happiest Dora had ever known. All the sad forbodings that oppressed her but a little before were forgotten, as she moved through the brilliant scene, listening to the music, and taking her part in the dance. Nor was it without a thrill of pleasure that she saw herself the centre of attraction and admiration. With the exception of the slight acquaintance which morning visits had enabled her to form with some of the party, all were strangers to her; but her new-found

relations had already given her a sense of protection which her uncle's guardianship did not afford.

"How long is it since you were at St. Cloud?" she said, when Sir Eustace mentioned having visited it.

"Nearly four years. I went to see a Spanish lady, with whom I was acquainted, take the veil."

"I was there," said Dora. "It was the profession of Sister Maria di Grazia. She took the veil shortly after my arrival."

"I was ignorant of your being there, or I should have seen you."

"Did you know Sister Maria?" she inquired, after a short pause. I loved her more than any one in the convent. She was gentle and affectionate; but so melancholy, I hardly ever saw her smile."

"Her fate was, indeed, a miserable one," said Sir Eustace. "She was, as you know, a Spanish lady of rank, and attached to an English officer, with whom I was intimately acquainted. He was a Protestant, and her family forbade their union. With her own consent, he concerted a plan, in which I assisted him, to carry her off. All was arranged, and so far successful. Already she was safe under our protection; but anxious to secure her from all possibility of being taken from him, my friend insisted on having the marriage ceremony performed by an English military chaplain, who was in our secret. The ceremony was but just begun, when we were surprised by a band of armed men. Resistance was utterly hopeless; yet we rushed among them. A few seconds and the unequal contest was at an end. My friend lay wounded at my side; and the cries of the helpless girl died away in the distance, as she was borne off by her enraged relations. For some time my friend continued unable to move from his couch. I made every effort to learn the fate of Donna Isabella, but was unable to obtain any information. At last I succeeded in learning that she had been placed by her family in a convent in France, with the intention of forcing her to take the veil. My poor friend, on hearing

this intelligence, insisted upon going to France, in the hope of rescuing her, though at the risk of opening his half-closed wounds. Alas! his strength failed long ere our journey was completed: and entreating me, if possible, to see and convey to her the assurance of his undying love, he expired in my arms. I hastened to St. Cloud as soon as I had performed the last duties to my unfortunate friend, and arrived a few days before that appointed for the profession of Donna Isabella. She was so strictly guarded that all efforts to obtain an interview were in vain. By means of a lay sister I conveyed a note informing her of the sad event. We met for the last time the day she took the veil We exchanged a farewell look. I saw that her heart was broken; but the calmness and peace of her countenance gave me hope that she might find that rest and consolation in the Church which she had for ever lost in the world."

"I believe she does," said Dora, thoughtfully; her reputation for sanctity is very high. Perhaps it is better for her as it is. Had she been united to a heretic, her—" she paused, and colored deeply.

"What were you going to say?" inquired Sir Eustace.

"That—that—perhaps she might have become a Protestant," answered Dora, as the remembrance of her aunt's faith rushed to her mind.

"And if she had become so from sincere conviction, why should we have regretted it? I am of the same faith as you, and for many reasons I prefer the Catholic Church, though I believe many go to heaven who are not within her pale; but she might have married a Protestant without changing her faith. I hate all coercion in matters of religion, and think that in these, as in worldly affairs, rational beings should choose for themselves."

CHAPTER IV.

"My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail,
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavor,
Though I should gaze for ever,
On that green light that lingers in the west.
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within."

COLERIDGE.

A FEW months had passed, and Dora sat by the sea one lovely afternoon in the end of autumn. A change had passed upon her, greater, it would seem, than so short a time could have wrought. An expression of thought and care was impressed on her fair young brow. Her cheek was pale, and her earnest eyes looked as if they were gazing into hidden depths unseen by all around. Her smile was sweet as ever, but more rarely seen, and was rather given to the feelings of others than emanating from her own. A quiet, almost matured, dignity of manner had taken the place of her girlish vivacity, and those who loved her before almost reverenced her now. As she sat on the sea-beach alone, the autumn winds sighing around her, and the heavy waves booming at her feet, her gaze looked abstracted from all visible things. Much had passed during these few months thus so rapidly to mature the girl into womanhood. The first change that came to Dora was the loneliness that soon after her birth-day fête surrounded her at Carlington. She did not feel this when wandering in her beloved haunts around the Castle. She

would spend hours in such solitude; but when she returned, the old walls were so dreary—there was no bright face or kind smile to welcome her there. Father Adrien discovered in Dora's character a degree of strength far beyond what he had imagined; and he saw that his influence must be firmly established, if he would acquire the power over her which the interest of the Church demanded. Dora had formed many plans of embellishing her estate, and improving the condition of the peasantry. She was impatient to put them into execution, but unforeseen difficulties arose on every side. She was hedged in by what her uncle had already done; and there was scarcely one design of her own that was not, by some means or other, subverted. Aroused at last to indignation by the constant frustration of every wish, she spoke to the priest, and asserted her determination to act independently. He listened with calmness, but his countenance assumed an expression of pain.

"Then all my prayers have been in vain, my daughter! Is that reigning fault of your character yet so unsubdued? It is not that the things you desire are in themselves sinful, but the virtue to which you are specially called is that of passive obedience; while you are deficient in this, all deeds of charity are less than nothing."

Dora was silent. A chord was touched which her uncle knew would vibrate powerfully. She was perfectly conscious that an unbending self-will was the prominent fault in her character. To this, since she had left the convent, Father Adrien had especially directed her attention. He taught her to detect and confess its most secret workings; and the penances he imposed were disproportionably severe. Shut up as she was to his influence, and spending so much time in solitude, an almost morbid self-condemnation had acquired a deep hold of her sensitive mind, and the shaft aimed by the priest stuck fast in the already wounded spirit. Day by day, Dora became more enchained, while a misdirected conscientiousness paralyzed her efforts to free herself. A temporary relief at last came. One

bright summer afternoon, while she was indulging in gloomy meditations, she was interrupted by the arrival of a party at the castle, and with delight she recognized the carriage of Lady Fitzgerald. She knew they had gone to London almost immediately after her birthday, but had not heard of their return; and it was with a thrill of gladness such as she rarely experienced that she hastened to welcome them.

"I have come to carry you off, my child," said Lady Fitzgerald, when the first salutations were over. "I have been longing to see you again, and must now really insist upon taking you to Ballyrowan."

"You will not find me a very unwilling captive," said Dora, smiling.—"But when did you return? I rode to the lodge a few days ago, and heard you were not then expected."

"We arrived only last night, so I have lost no time in claiming my prize. But I must hasten you off, for we have a long drive, and shall hardly be in time for dinner."

In a few minutes Dora was ready. Her uncle had gone that morning to Dublin for a few days. The thought arose in her mind, whether he would approve of her visiting a family at least partly Protestant. "They are my relations," she answered, mentally. "I have already determined not to suffer any difference of faith to interrupt the intercourse of friendship. If I disavow all communion in religion, that is sufficient."

She went into Miss Beauford's room as she passed, to apologize for leaving her.

"Lady Fitzgerald wishes me to accompany her home; but I will not go, if you dislike being left by yourself, aunt."

"No, I never feel lonely," said Miss Beauford; "but I think it would be proper to wait for your uncle's permission before you accept an invitation from a heretic family."

"Oh! I have determined not to give up my mother's relations; they cannot move my faith."

She bade her aunt a hasty adieu, and in a few moments was in the carriage.

A sense of delicious liberty gave her spirits their old buoyancy, as she drove rapidly along the beach with Lady Fitzgerald and Cecilia. They arrived at Ballyrowan after a delightful drive of two hours. Dora had never been further than the lodge, and she was charmed with the beauty of the place. It was of a style very different from Carlington, and possessed none of its gloom. That part of the lawn which surrounded the house was laid out in flower-gardens, and all the arrangements within and around presented a combination of comfort and taste. A small party of friends had accompanied the family from town; and the conversation at the dinner-table was marked, not only by cultivation, but also by a liberality of sentiment to which Dora had hitherto been a stranger. Sir Eustace spoke little: he seemed rather to draw out the sentiments of others than to express his own; but in all he said there was a force and interest that gave zest to every subject on which he touched. His remarks were peculiarly suggestive, and opened to Dora more than one train of ideas, which she treasured in her mind as matter of future reflection. The evening was spent in music; and, as it passed swiftly on, she waited not to inquire why she seemed to breathe a purer atmosphere, or where was the spell which had so long bound her spirit, the power of which she had hardly been conscious of till she felt relief from its grasp. It was not till she retired to her room that she remembered these few bright days would quickly pass, and she must return to her dreary solitude and uniform routine; but she concluded her nightly orisons, threw herself upon her bed, and in sleep forgot the pressure of that thought.

When she opened her eyes, the morning sun shone brightly around her; she banished the cloud on her heart, resolved to enjoy to-day, whatever might await her on the morrow. She spent part of the forenoon alone with her aunt. Lady Fitzgerald expressed much surprise when she heard of the solitude in which her life was spent.

"You formed acquaintances on your birth-night with most of

the neighboring families. There are not, indeed, many resident proprietors, but enough to form a very agreeable society: why have you not cultivated them?"

"My uncle does not wish me to visit at present."

"I know you must reverence your uncle as your guide in religious matters, my child; but with regard to your mode of spending your time, surely you are at liberty to do as you please?"

"I have indeed a right to choose for myself," replied Dora; "but we may sometimes be required to give up our rights in struggling to bring the will into subjection."

"Yes," said Lady Fitzgerald, "the will must bow to the principles of right, but not to the arbitrary rule of an individual"

"I do not bow to the command of an individual, but to the Church; but will you tell me *now*, dear aunt, what you promised, of your early history?"

Had Dora been conversing with one of her own faith, she would gladly have continued the subject, for the balance between free-will and obedience was the subject of many deep and painful thoughts; but she was afraid to pursue the controversy with a heretic. Her aunt observed this, and urged it no further; but immediately complied with her request, by relating her history.

"You have often heard, I daresay," she said, "descriptions of your mother's paternal home. It was a wild, lonely castle, on the northern coast, far distant from hence. My mother died in giving me birth. My father was naturally of a stern and unsociable temper, and rendered more so by the loss of her gentle companionship. He was secluded almost entirely from society, and the early years of my life were spent with no other companionship than that of a French Protestant lady, who had been selected as my instructress. Her religion I have no doubt would have prevented her being chosen for such an office, had not her excelling accomplishments overcome this difficulty, and, relying upon her promise never to interfere with my faith, my

father intrusted me to her care. To this promise she strictly adhered; but I soon discovered that her religion was different from my own; and, with the restlessness of a mind thirsting for knowledge, and shut out from every other source of information, I was persevering in my inquiries, while her guarded answers only increased my inquisitiveness. Nor was I satisfied with searching into the nature of the Protestant faith alone. I also began to investigate my own, and reject whatever did not commend itself to reason. I have described to you a progress of mind that occupied years. The result was, that at the age of eighteen I declared myself a Protestant. My avowal was followed by a sentence of banishment from my father's house. Then, Dora, came the first trial of my life. It was a desolate thing to be cast off by kindred and friends; and, within the last few years, new ties had been formed, which it almost broke my heart to tear asunder. My father had married again, and in my young step-mother I had found a friend. Your mother was then a lovely child of three years old, whom I loved as my own. But the wrench must be made, and I strove to bear it. I could not yield my mind again to the enslaving superstition from which it had escaped."

She paused for a moment, while a glow of enthusiasm covered her still lovely features. Dora involuntarily relinquished the hand she held, and turned her large dark eyes upon her with a look of pain and reproach.

"Forgive me, my child," said Lady Fitzgerald. "O, that our opinions on that subject were less widely severed!"

"May the Holy Virgin enlighten you, and bring you back to the arms of the Church," said Dora, raising her eyes to heaven with a look of fervent supplication. "Go on, dear aunt, I long to hear more."

"The blow could not be delayed," continued Lady Fitzgerald; "nor did I wish that it should. Once resolved, I did not seek to linger in the home from which I was an outcast. On the morning of my departure, my father refused to see me. One

long agonized embrace from my kind young mother—one fervent kiss on my baby's cheek—and I bade adieu to my home for ever. I strained my eyes to catch the last glimpse of its old towers, but the rocks and trees soon hid them from my sight. Madame Baneli met me in Dublin. She had been dismissed on the discovery of my change. Though she had never attempted to influence me, I knew she rejoiced in my decision; and her affection in part consoled me for all I had lost. She accompanied me to England, for my own country had become distasteful to me. I resided at Brighton for some time, under her protection. I there first met Sir Louis Fitzgerald, at the house of a mutual friend.

"Our intimacy had made some progress before I knew the faith he professed; and when I did learn that he was a member of the Romish Church, my first impulse was to break it off, not from any idea of sin, but because I believed the intolerance that had driven me from my home was universal in the Romish Church; but I was mistaken. Sir Louis was mild and liberal in his views; and when I urged the difference of our religion as a reason for rejecting the offer of his hand, he allowed me such entire freedom in following the dictates of my conscience, and placed in such attractive colors before me the happiness of mutual toleration, that my scruples were soon overcome; and, unconscious of either error or danger in the step, I became his wife. He was invariably kind; and I enjoyed with him as much happiness as could be wished for under our circumstances, for our hearts were separated on the vital point of religion. There we had no intercourse. My children, too, were educated in different faiths, according to the marriage contract. Madame Baneli resided with us for two years. At the end of that time she died in my arms, gratefully blessing my husband's kindness, which had provided so happy an asylum for her closing life. Released from the promise that before had restrained her, and for which she greatly blamed herself, she fully and freely conversed with me on all subjects of religious belief, and often

expressed her fear that I had changed my creed more from conviction of errors in the church I had left, than from a well-grounded faith in the tenets I had adopted. This fear she expressed more earnestly on her death-bed, and implored me to study carefully the Holy Scriptures, nor be satisfied until my faith rested on the declarations of Inspired Truth alone. When days of trouble and sorrow came upon me," continued Lady Fitzgerald, after a short pause, "I found the value of her advice, and followed her directions. In doing so, I became acquainted with the true source of her peace. I sought and found Him who is the Saviour of every penitent sinner. Since the time He first revealed Himself to me, He has been my support in sorrow, my guide in difficulty, and He will be my strength in death. But now, my child, we must return. I fear we have been already too long absent."

"I have much yet to hear from you, dear aunt," said Dora, as they entered the house; "much of my mother's history, and many questions I wish to ask you, if you will allow me, about yourself."

She looked up with an earnest expression, half fearful she was asking too much, but one glance of her aunt's countenance reassured her. It expressed both confidence and affection; but it spoke, too, so much of sad and mingled feeling, that it deepened the interest already awakened in Dora's heart. They entered the saloon together. Dora was almost surprised at the quickness with which Lady Fitzgerald banished every trace of emotion, and at once appeared to those around her the calm disengaged woman of the world. It was a lesson she too must learn ere long.

CHAPTER V.

Lo! the spell now works around thee,
And the clankless chain hath bound thee;
O'er thy heart and brain together
Hath the word been passed—now wither.

MANFRED.

In riding with Cecilia and Sir Eustace, Dora was much struck with the appearance of the peasantry, so different from any she had before seen in Ireland—the clean and smiling aspect of the cottages, the cultivation of their little fields, and the air of comfort blended with the romantic haunts which everywhere met her view. She expressed the surprise she felt.

"What is the reason," she asked, "of the great difference I see between the peasanty here and those at Carlington? The race of people and their religion are the same. I see the soil is much richer, but that can hardly account for the difference."

"No; that has comparatively little to do with the state of the people," replied Sir Eustace. "The soil of Ireland is amply sufficient for the support of its people, in even its less fertile parts; but, though something has been done here, I cannot look around without regretting that it is so little. The curse of absenteeism rested upon this as upon almost every part of our unhappy country, and the few years of care and culture that have been bestowed upon it, have not yet overcome its effects."

At this moment they were startled by the sudden apparition of an old woman, who had been cowering under a furze bush in their path. She was wrapped in a dark mantle, and her wild elf

locks streamed unheeded from beneath a cap or curch that partially covered her head.

Her figure was of an extraordinary height, and there was in her whole manner and appearance a mixture of wild enthusiasm, with power and energy that almost awed the beholder. Her picturesque appearance, the force of her language and gestures, and the noble, yet careworn expression of her features, might have presented a sybil of the olden time.

Dora's horse started and reared as the old woman planted herself directly in front of it. Sir Eustace instantly seized the bridle, but she was an experienced horsewoman, and immediately reduced it to order. An emotion which her momentary danger had not called forth was, however, awakened when she met the coal-black eyes of the hag fixed upon her, with what seemed to her an almost unearthly gleam. It was impossible, too, to escape, for she had laid hold of the bridle of her horse.

"Good day to you, Hester Flanaghan!" said Sir Eustace, who saw Dora's terror, while he brought his horse close to her side. "You have come far over the hills to-day."

Hester seemed as though she heard him not, while she continued to gaze into Dora's face.

"Ohone! Ohone!" she exclaimed at last, letting go the bridle, and throwing her hands with a wild gesture above her head—"to see the touch of sorrow on a brow so young and fair! The autumn bolt will fall on the spring day, and the winter's cold in the heat of the summer's sunshine. The doom is upon ye, lady; the cloud is dark over yer head; but a strong hand, and a true heart, and an unbelieving ear, will bear ye through all, through all, through all," she exclaimed, as she passed her hand across her brow, as if some vision had appeared and interrupted the chain of her thoughts—"yes, through all. The storm will pass, and you will rise unscathed above it, though the spring-flower will have withered, and the blossom fallen from the tree!"

She turned hastily from them without noticing Sir Eustace and Cecilia, plunged into the wood, and quickly disappeared.

Dora had become very pale. "Who is that?" she inquired, in a tone that bespoke her emotion. "Who is that strange old woman?"

"She is a native of Conemara," replied Sir Eustace, "but has haunted this place, I believe, for the last twenty years. An accumulation of misfortunes have fostered what must have been a naturally wild and eccentric turn of mind, and she now wanders about the country, gaining a livelihood by the charity of the people. But not even in the depth of winter has she ever been known to pass the night under a roof. The coldest nights are passed by her, wrapped in her cloak, beneath the shelter of some rock or bush, or at most a ruined barn. I fear she has startled you?"

"Her sudden appearance did for a moment; but her mysterious words!—what can they mean?"

"Nothing," said Sir Eustace, "but that the old woman's brain is crazed. Surely, Miss Mowbray, you cannot suffer such vague prognostications to trouble your mind for one moment."

But Dora was troubled. A shadow had fallen on her brow, which did not leave it during the remainder of their ride.

"There are those in the world that hold communion with unseen spirits," she said, gravely, "and eyes that can see behind the veil which hides the future from our sight; but, although the shadow may thus fall too soon across our path, it is weakness to be so disturbed. Whether the future bring weal or woe, let us be ready to bear it."

During the rest of the day, Dora could not shake off the impression of this scene; but the influences around her were too sweet and soothing for it to weigh very heavily upon her mind. Soon the visitors departed, and she was left alone with her relations; but she felt herself so perfectly an adopted child of the house, that she could hardly realize that another home claimed her, and these bright days must pass too soon. The mornings were spent with Lady Fitzgerald and Cecilia, the afternoons occupied in riding, and the evenings in music. Nearly

a fortnight had thus passed swiftly on, when one day, on returning from a long excursion, as Sir Eustace was assisting her to alight from her horse, Mr. Mowbray descended the steps to receive her. Had a thunderbolt fallen at her feet, the shock could hardly have been greater. A few moments she trembled so that she could hardly stand. By a quick effort, she recovered her presence of mind, and replied calmly to his smooth, bland greeting.

"When did you return to Carlington?" she said, as they entered the house.

"Last night. I was detained in Dublin longer than I expected, and was surprised to find you absent when I arrived. I am glad your time has been so pleasantly occupied, but I fear you must return home. A friend has accompanied me whom I should wish you to meet."

"To-morrow, you are engaged, Dora," said Lady Fitzgerald.

"Yes, this was a prior engagement; my uncle will make an apology to his friend."

"Impossible," said the priest. "Lady Fitzgerald, I am sure, will excuse you. I wish you to accompany me to-morrow."

He spoke still in his bland, calm tone, yet there was a cold determination in his voice and eye which said, "I will have it so."

Dora's cheek became pale. "I will go, then," she said, quietly.

Sir Eustace looked at her with surprise. She seemed a different being from what she had been half an hour before. But he knew not the spell by which she was bound. All night that hopelessness of look and tone lasted.

She was dressing the following morning, when a servant brought a message from Mr. Mowbray, to say that the carriage waited. She was surprised, for she had not intended to go till after breakfast. A momentary feeling of indignation arose, but she made no effort to resist the bondage, and, hastily completing *her toilet*, went to her aunt to say farewell. As she left her

room, she cast a sad look around. She felt as if every inanimate thing sympathized with the happy emotions she had enjoyed there. But the priest's voice sounded in the hall, and she hastened on.

"Do you go so early?" said her aunt, as she folded her in her arms. "I had hoped you would at least have spent the forenoon with us."

"I did not mean to go so early, but my uncle has ordered the carriage, and I must not now keep him waiting. Will you come to Carlington soon? I shall feel so desolate without you, dear aunt."

"I will come to see you ere many days have passed, my child. Farewell! May God bless you!"

These words, so often lightly spoken, were pronounced in a tone which came from the heart—a heart that knew the world and its snares, and yearned with almost a mother's tenderness over one so young and unprotected, who must tread alone a path beset with danger. Tears filled Cecilia's blue eyes when she heard Dora must go; but an April smile shone through them, as they spoke of rides they would take together, of excursions to be made in the long bright summer days. Dora was soothed by their tenderness. But there was one whom she expected to see at the hall-door, who came not. As Mr. Mowbray handed her into the carriage, she heard Lady Fitzgerald ask one of the servants if Sir Eustace was not at home. He had walked out early in the morning. The carriage-door was shut, she waved a parting adieu, and they drove rapidly down the avenue.

They arrived at Carlington in time for breakfast. Her uncle had told her that his friend was an Italian nobleman, with whom he had been intimately acquainted abroad. He had been spending a few months in England, and had come to Ireland, for the purpose of visiting its beautiful scenery, when he met Mr. Mowbray in Dublin. Dora liked foreigners in general, and had somewhat romantic ideas associated with Italy. She was there

fore relieved to find that the monotony of Carlington was likely to be broken in upon for a time by the introduction of so agreeable an inmate. Her aunt was alone in the breakfast-room when she entered, and welcomed her with something more nearly approaching to kindness than she had ever before shown, for, in truth, the old lady had felt very lonely during the absence of her niece, and was not sorry to see her return. Mr. Mowbray almost immediately entered, accompanied by his friend, whom he introduced as the Conté di Romilli. He was a man in the prime of life, tall, dark, with marked and finely-formed features. His noble forehead, dark hair, slightly tinged with gray, and piercing eyes, and perfectly curved mouth, formed altogether a contour so unquestionably handsome, that the beholder wondered why his feelings were not of unmingled pleasure. There was ever in his presence a sensation of treading in the dark. The bland smile and the musical voice told absolutely nothing of the heart of their possessor, and the deep penetrating eye that read the minds of others spoke nothing of his own.

Dora felt all this ere she had spent many minutes in his society. He saw she did, and, exerting all his powers of fascination, in some measure dispelled the feeling, and drew her into animated conversation. The breakfast hour was unusually prolonged, when at last the little party broke up, and Dora went as usual to spend the forenoon in her sitting-room. She felt Carlington less gloomy than she expected, and looked forward with somewhat of pleasure to a renewal, in the evening, of intercourse with her agreeable guest.

During the few succeeding days, she found her home more tolerable. Mr. Mowbray was occupied with his friend, and she was more at liberty than usual. The Count's society was even more fascinating than at first. Lady Fitzgerald and Cecilia soon came to Carlington, and were easily persuaded to remain. Sir Eustace joined them on the following day. From the first hour of their introduction, there seemed to exist a mutual aver-

sion between him and the Count. Lady Fitzgerald appeared in some degree to share this feeling.

"How do you like the Count?" asked Dora, a few days after their arrival.

"I do not *dislike* him," said Lady Fitzgerald; "but I think him one of those opaque characters who excite distrust, because you see there is so much concealed."

"But he is very agreeable, and surely you must admire his talents?"

"Yes, he evidently possesses a powerful and cultivated mind, but his character appears to me to be very subtle, and I would greatly dread his influence over any one I loved. So take care, my child," she continued, kissing the brow of her niece, "that you do not suffer this foreigner to fascinate you too deeply. It is a painful but necessary lesson to learn as we pass through life, not to yield our confidence until we have tested the ground on which it is given."

"Do not fear for me, dear aunt. The Count leaves us in a few days, and I suppose I shall never see him again. But there is a latent feeling in my own mind, which you have put into a definite shape, which would, I believe, have prevented his ever acquiring any great influence over me."

"Yes, with you I believe it would," said Lady Fitzgerald, thoughtfully.

At that moment she caught a glimpse from the window of the Count and Cecilia in the shrubbery, and a dark shade clouded her brow. Too soon her fears were verified. The Count's attentions to Cecilia were marked, though in the presence of others too insidious to afford an opening for their repression. But Cecilia felt that, whether alone or amidst others, she was ever the first object of his thoughts. She yielded too readily to the fascination, and gave herself up without reserve to the resistless power of one who but a week before was an entire stranger. Lady Fitzgerald saw the danger, though by no means aware of its extent; and partially explaining her fears to

Dora, prepared to return home. Mr. Mowbray had expressed a desire that his friend should become acquainted with the lovely scenery around Ballyrowan; but Sir Eustace was impervious to every such hint, and the desired invitation came not. The instinctive dislike which he had at first felt to the Count had strengthened as their intercourse increased. It was not because their sentiments differed widely that he felt thus. He could have esteemed and admired an open antagonist, but he discerned a deep subtlety in the character of the Count which repelled him, and the Count's antipathy to him was not less decided, though more concealed.

"I have just returned from visiting that poor man I saw yesterday," said Mr. Mowbray, on the evening before Sir Eustace's departure, as he met the Count in the saloon. They entered the library together. Sir Eustace was there.

"Does he still adhere to his opinions?" inquired the Count.

"He does, and refuses the sacraments of the Church."

"Let him then perish in his apostacy," returned the Count, abruptly. "His fate will remain an awful warning to others."

"Of what dreadful fate do you speak?" inquired Sir Eustace, whose attention had been attracted by the concluding words.

The Count was silent, and looked rather embarrassed.

Mr. Mowbray answered gravely, "I spoke of young O'Gorman, Sir Eustace, who, you are aware, lately joined a body of Dissenters. He is now dying, and refuses to confess, or receive the sacraments."

"Is he attended," inquired Sir Eustace, "by a clergyman of his own persuasion?"

"He is attended," answered the priest, while his brow flushed with anger, "by one who has incurred the awful guilt of assuming a name and office to which he has no claim. I hardly expected to hear a member of our Holy Church thus degrade her to an equality with the miserable outcasts from her pale."

"We have ere now discussed this subject," replied Sir Eustace, quietly, but almost sternly. "I believe that none are

outcasts from God's favor who obey His laws ; but that, in every Church, those who do justly and love mercy are accepted of Him."

The Count, as Sir Eustace spoke, fixed his eyes upon him with a peculiarly sinister expression ; but, on seeing he was observed, withdrew them, and left the room.

On the day after their departure, a light was burning at an unusually late or rather early hour in a small turret of the Castle. Mr. Mowbray was there, and the Conte di Romilli, but their mutual relation appeared changed. An air of haughty authority marked the deportment of the Count, whilst, with the most deferential submission, Mr. Mowbray awaited his commands.

"Your plans appear, on the whole, likely to prosper, brother," said the Count ; "but Miss Mowbray's character is one that places almost insurmountable difficulties in your way. I never saw greater strength and independence of spirit in one so young, and such indomitable self-will. But the Church will find means of breaking that. She must take the veil, and that ere long, but not at St. Cloud. We allowed her to remain there far too long ; its discipline is too mild for such a one."

"Yet, father," replied Mr. Mowbray, in a tone of deference, "had her affections been less worked upon, and her convent life less happy, the moment she escaped from it the rebound would have been so great, she would long ere now have been beyond our power."

"You are right," said the Count, abruptly. "By what means," he continued, after a short pause, "do you mean to preserve your influence over her ?"

"Her obedience to the Church. Her conscience is morbidly sensitive, and from her earliest infancy I have showed her that self-will is the sin of her character peculiarly offensive to Heaven. This is the master-key to her whole nature ; by means of it, I can retain her under our power."

"It will not long remain the master-key, however," said the

Jesuit. "Let her affections once be engaged, and their force will bear down every obstacle. I must confess, brother, I do not understand your policy in suffering her to have unrestrained intercourse with that skeptic and his heretic mother. Let *him* once gain the mastery over her feelings, and our power will be but as dust in the balance."

"You forget, father," said Mr. Mowbray, "the bar of consanguinity. They are first cousins. She is unaware, at present, of any influence on her feelings, and, if separated from her relations, I doubt not, would soon be broken into a passive contentment. But her people idolize her, and she is devoted to their interests, and every attempt to remove her from Carlington would be utterly ruinous. The caged bird exhausts itself most quickly when it beats against the wires of its prison. A rejected suit will cause separation from her relations; the strength of her character will be crushed with its affections. She will then be passive and unresisting in our hands, and a journey to Italy, terminating in a convent of the Ursulines, would be a very easy matter."

"I am not sure of that," said the other; "she will not allow herself lightly to be separated from one such as he. Your plans will fail here, I fear, brother."

"No," returned Mr. Mowbray. "You know not, father, the superstitious veneration of her mind. She never will marry against the commands of the Church; and a dispensation, you know, she will never obtain."

The Jesuit appeared satisfied.

"There is one point still," he said, after a short silence. "That doating old woman is still in attendance upon her. My advice has been neglected in this."

"It was impossible to prevent it. I acted as I thought best for the interests of the Church. The attachment between her and her nurse is so excessive, and her spirit is still so imperfectly broken, that to contend this point would, I am sure, only have increased our difficulties."

"Ah! it is well," said the other; "but, as soon as possible,

try to accomplish this. Much may pass of which we cannot have cognizance, except by the attendance of a trusty person. And now with regard to our subordinate plan. I do not think Miss Fitzgerald will soon forget me ; but you will have many opportunities of ascertaining this, and must give me warning. Meanwhile, the fears of her mother and Sir Eustace will be lulled by my disappearance. Now," he continued, "my work here for the present is done. Be faithful, brother, be vigilant, and your reward is secure."

The subordinate bowed obedience, and they separated.

On the afternoon of the following day, the Count left Carlington. He was urged by Mr. Mowbray to return when he had completed his tour, and Dora could not help seconding the invitation. It was declined by the Count, who said that he must be in town by a certain day, on his way to the Continent, and that the attractions of their society had detained him too long already.

He went, and Carlington Castle was left once more to its dreary loneliness. To Dora, it was now more than ever dreary. Before, it had been but a loneliness of feeling, but now it was a loneliness of heart. She felt it chiefly when with others ; alone, she was not solitary, for then she could hold communion with the spirit that was ever present with her. Her brief sojourn at Ballyrowan had awakened feelings never to be destroyed, and an image was ever near her in her lonely hours, that seemed to surround her with a guardian angel's care.

Her gloomy life was often broken by visits from Lady Fitzgerald and Cecilia, generally accompanied by Sir Eustace; but during the summer she was not again at Ballyrowan, for, as often as it was proposed, some engagement was recalled or some obstacle presented by the priest, which defeated the intention almost as soon as formed. Dora could not but feel that Sir Eustace loved her, though, as yet, it was an intuitive consciousness only, for their intercourse was such a mental companionship as might have existed between a father and a daughter. She felt she

was perpetually the subject of his observation. Her character, her actions, her very looks, were studied by him with a scrutiny that was often almost severe. She never heard those flattering words from him to which she was accustomed from others, but he seemed jealous of every fault, displeased by every imperfection; yet she shrank not from this scrutiny, for there was such repose in the knowledge of his deep interest, such gentle kindness in his manner, even when most severe, that the awe with which she regarded him gave an additional zest to her confidence.

One evening she felt unusually sad as she sat alone in the library, and, after indulging for some time in a train of musings, she rose to seek a book Sir Eustace had advised her to read. As she opened the volume, a paper fluttered out. She picked it up, and read the following lines:—

"The gayest of the gay is she,
With light and buoyant mind;
Yet gaiety is half confined
By calm reflection, like a sea
Which sleeps behind.

"Just look at the foam-crested wave,
Its dimpled cheek and rainbow hair,
Light turning to the summer air,
While stilly rests in coral cave
Its bosom fair.

"Or turn you to the birchen bough,
Coquetting with the torrent's spray,
While round the rock so rough and gray,
In close embrace its tendrils grow
As if for aye."

The lines were carelessly written in pencil, and without any signature, but a date was affixed—that of the morning after her birthday *fête*. As she was about to replace the paper, her eye caught a partially effaced address on the other side—"To Sir Eustace F——." In a moment the conviction of the truth flashed upon her mind. She was the subject of these lines. Thus early, then, in their intercourse had he felt interest in her. She resumed her place in the window, and laid the open volume

before her; but the sun had set, and the pale beams of the early moon were streaming into the room ere she awoke to the consciousness that she had not read one line. Happy visions had been floating before her mind. She no longer felt alone and desolate. Consciousness of protection, that there was some one in the world to care for her, gave her spirit the feeling of a home.

CHAPTER VI.

"For, to be plain,
They have hired me to undermine the Duchess,
And buy these conjurations in her brain."

HENRY VI.

"I SUPPOSE my opinion is of no consequence," said Miss Beauford one morning, as she met Dora returning from her early walk, her cheeks glowing, and her hair blown in unwonted confusion by the fresh autumn breeze; "but I have always been accustomed to regard neatness and propriety as amongst the first requisites of a young lady's toilet. Times have changed since then, but I am grieved to say, I cannot think them improved; but what can be expected, when you will persist in having no other attendant than nurse? That old woman has neither taste nor judgment in dress. I am sick of these eternal white muslin gowns and straw bonnets, and your hair with hardly any other ornament in the evening but flowers."

"It is not nurse's fault, I am sure," said Dora, smiling, "if I do not wear ornaments. I believe she would think the diamonds of Golconda scarcely rich enough to deck me; but I do not like ornaments, aunt—the skill of a Parisian waiting-maid would be quite thrown away upon me."

"I have before offered to give you Harris," said Miss Beau-

ford. "When I got her in France last year, her taste was often declared unrivalled; and I do not require such a person—she could soon train one of these Irish girls for me."

"I thank you, but I never could change nurse," said Dora, quickly; it would break her heart if she were not allowed to wait on me."

"I should think Miss Mowbray's appearance rather more to be consulted than Mrs. Sullivan's feelings," said Miss Beauford, drawing herself up stiffly. "Your uncle has several times said to me, that he really wished I would take some interest in your dress, and that the things you wear are not fit to be seen. I told him I had done all I could; but when young people will think themselves wiser than any one else ——." At this moment Mr. Mowbray entered the room.

"I have just been trying to persuade Dora to take Harris as her maid," said Miss Beauford; "she is so afraid of hurting the feelings of her nurse, I believe she would rather wear sackcloth than be dressed by any one else."

"Ah! nurse is a good woman," said Mr. Mowbray, in his blandest tone, "but she is getting rather too old for the duties of a *femme-de-chambre*. By the bye, it just occurred to me a few days ago, how much more comfortable she would be, at her age, in a house of her own, and I have desired Riley to get that little cabin at the end of the beach-wood ready for her."

Dora's brow flushed with indignation—"I will not have nurse removed from this house," said she, haughtily. "I had designed that cottage for Lanty and his wife, so Riley may get it ready for them; but while I have a roof to shelter me, nurse shall share it."

"Certainly, as you choose," said the priest; "of course, it shall be as you wish, but will you not at least accept Miss Beauford's offer of Harris's personal attendance? Your dress is very pretty and becoming, but rather too girlish for the mistress of this mansion. Nurse cannot possibly have the taste and *experience necessary* to aid you to make a suitable appearance."

Dora's hasty resentment had already passed ; and, anxious to please, where she could do so without wounding another, she said sweetly to Miss Beauford, "I shall be very glad to avail myself of Harris's taste, if you will allow her to come to my room sometimes when I dress for the evening, but I could not, on any account, dismiss nurse from her office, nor could I be happy, I believe, with any other attendant."

A small party, composed principally of the neighboring families, was to dine at Carlington that day.—Nurse was preparing to commence Dora's toilet when Harris appeared. "Oh ! nurse, Miss Beauford wished Harris to dress me to-day," said Dora, kindly ; "but you must remain in the room, and learn the latest fashions."

Nurse and Harris eyed each other with looks that might have slain. Respect for her lady kept nurse silent.

"You will not wear that, Miss Mowbray," said Harris, rather contemptuously, casting aside the brocaded muslin which, in compliance with her darling's usual taste, nurse had laid out ; "the season grows late now—pray let me put on your black velvet." Dora submitted without remonstrance ; and when Harris had completed her labors, and clasped a *bandeau* of costly brilliants round her raven hair, she surveyed her work with no small complacency : and, elegant and suitable as Dora's attire usually was, she had never appeared to greater advantage.

When she retired to her room at night, she found everything as usual, but the old woman was not there. On inquiry, she found that nurse had gone to bed, and complained of illness. She hastened to her side.—"What is the matter, nurse ?" she said, affectionately ; "you were quite well when I went down to dinner."

"Never mind yer nurse, mavourneen, but go and be beautiful, and gay, and happy, and lave the ould crathur to die—and die she will, shure, soon enough now : of what use is she more in the world, since her own child has turned her out of her sarvice, jewel ?"

"Turn you away, nurse! I would as soon turn away the mother that bore me," said Dora, warmly. "Have you not carried me in your arms, and nursed me when I was a baby, and could I now forsake you in your old age—could I be happy with any one else?" putting her arms round her neck with a warmth which almost dispelled her distress.

"Now, nurse, good night; go to sleep, and come to me in the morning, and Harris shall not dress me any more, since you dislike it. I only allowed it to please Miss Beauford; but nothing shall be done that vexes you."

"But don't go agin' his rivirence, dear," said nurse, now completely soothed—"shure he wants to deck you in these furrin' fashions, that yer ould nurse knows nothin' about; don't go to contradict them; and it's beautiful ye look, dear, and fit to go to the Queen's court any day,—ay, there's not one there 'ud be fit to hould the candle to yees; so just let her go on dressing you, but it's me that'll do everything else for my darlint, just as I used to do, and we'll not have her much about us, only when she comes in to deck yer beautiful hair, jewel, or the like."

The matter was thus amicably arranged, and Dora withdrew; but she had not been more than a few minutes in bed when the door opened, and nurse entered.

"I could not sleep, cuishla machree," said the old woman, coming close to her bed, "till I had come to see you, and to tell you that I would sarve you on my bended knees, tho' it was among a whole regiment of furriners—only, dear, they'll never love ye as your ould nurse does; but don't go to be afther throubling yer heart, for it wouldn't do to be goin' agin' the praste, and you can just have her as little as ye like. Now go to sleep, my jewel, and the saints be about yer bed, and let nothin' be throublin' ye, for I'd sooner give the dhrop from my heart than the tear from yer eye, darlint."

"You should not have come, nurse," said Dora; "it will hurt you to walk about at night when you are ill; go to bed, now,

and be well in the morning ; and be sure no one shall ever come between my heart and my own nurse."

Nurse wiped the tears from her aged eyes, and withdrew satisfied.

For the present all was arranged, but the elements of which nurse and Harris were composed were too incongruous ever to work together. Harris's manner was always bland and compliant before Dora ; but under all this smoothness there was a cold haughtiness, most difficult for nurse to bear : and the provocation which the old woman, in her lady's absence, could not always restrain herself from giving, often raised the opposing elements into a perfect storm of warfare.

These storms were hushed, however, the moment Dora appeared ; for nurse would not for the world have had her darling disturbed by such commotion. She was too warm-hearted and generous not to have lived on amicable terms with Dora's attendant, although an English woman, had it not been for the suspicions of her character which the old woman had early imbibed, and could not easily shake off. These suspicions were confirmed one day when she entered Dora's sitting-room, to see if her lady's fire burned brightly before she came in from her ride. Harris was there, and, at nurse's approach, hastily huddled a bundle of letters into Dora's writing-desk, which had been left open, and immediately resumed her usually smooth aspect ; but it was too late—the detection was complete.

" Good afternoon to ye kindly," said nurse, with a courtesy of ironical respect. " I hope ye have got yer divarsion with me lady's news ; and if ye're afther being done wid all ye wish, 'ud ye just be givin' me the kay, if ye plase, and I'll kape it for her till she comes in ?"

" Oh ! I was only putting in order some papers Miss Mowbray had left scattered about," said Harris, while the color mounted to her temples ; and if looks could have killed, nurse would have fallen dead on the spot.

" But I think me lady would prefer the kay being left where

she has placed it. And maybe ye needed to break the sales before ye could put them in order, ye bould, bad woman," said nurse; her constrained civility giving way before the torrent of her indignation, as her eye fell upon a note addressed in Lady Fitzgerald's handwriting, which, with a sort of instinctive knowledge that the priest disliked her intimacy with her Protestant relations, she had herself, half an hour before, taken from O'Brien, and brought up stairs. "Didn't I take that letter from O'Brien meself not half an hour ago, and bring it up here ready for me lady, (the saints be about her!) and ye would be afther raidin' id or ever she'd got a sight of it herself! I'll take care that me lady'll get a word to lock up all about her before she goes out agin, and thrusts to the likes of ye—pretty lamb that she is!"

"There is no necessity, Mrs. Nurse, to tell your lady anything of the kind," said Harris, with dignity; "I suppose you are aware that when I was placed about her, it was not to interfered with by any of her inferior attendants, and I am quite able to judge what is proper I should take charge of."

"And maybe," said nurse, resuming her ironical smoothness, "ye think fit to take charge of all that goes on betune me lady and her relations; but if ye do, it'll be at your oun charges, at any rate."

"Oh! I'll save you the trouble, Mrs. Nurse, of informing upon me. I am perfectly able to render an account of all my actions to my lady myself."

"Well, thin, in the mane time, is it the kay ye'll be givin' me?" said nurse.

"Certainly not; I have no superior in attendance upon my lady; I will give up to no one the charge with which I am intrusted."

"Well, thin, I'll be afther takin' care iv the fire till my lady comes in," said nurse; and, sitting down upon a stool, she leant her elbows on her knees, supporting her chin on her hands, while her countenance assumed an expression of the most deter-

mined purpose. Harris regarded her for a moment with ineffable contempt, and then swept out of the room.

Nurse was still there when Dora returned; but so also was Harris. Various ironical smiles from nurse, and haughty looks from Harris, passed between the combatants, while they attended their lady's toilet. Nothing was said on either side, till nurse brought Lady Fitzgerald's note to Dora.

"How has this been opened?" inquired she, quickly.

A humph from nurse, accompanied by a glance to Harris, and a haughty draw-up from the *femme-de-chambre*, were the only reply. Dora looked rather impatiently from one to the other.

"I assure you, ma'am," began Harris, "if it were not for my regard to you, and to my lady, Miss Beauford, I would ask permission to quit my situation this very day, and return to England, for Mrs. Nurse has hurt my feelings exceedingly. I have been fifteen years in the service of the noblest ladies in England, and I never was charged with opening a letter before."

"And who's chargin' ye wid it but yerself?" said nurse; "id's not I that 'ud defile me lips be spakin' to the likes iv id, if it wasn't me lady's things ye were meddlin' wid; but shure, ma'am dear, by yer lave, id was I that tuk the lether from O'Brien, and brought it up here, and I laid it there on yer table fornenst yer disk, and when I came back in half an hour to see if your fire was good, dear, sure there id was in her hand, and the sale broke, and she radin'; to say nothin' iv yer disk layin' open, and all she huddled in whin she seen me comin'!"

"I should hope, my lady, that you would believe my word as readily as that of any old crone in Ireland," said Harris, indignantly; "you know you left your writing-desk open, and I only replaced some papers. I don't want to charge any one; but it was nurse, by her own confession, who brought it up stairs."

"Shure, askin' your lave, me lady, id's not the fashion for ould crones in Ireland to be raidin' their ladies' secrets, or meddlin' with things that don't concarn them; and I am thinkin'

that it'll not be to-day nor to-morrow neither, that ye'll get me lady to believe that of her ould nurse."

"No, no, nurse," said Dora, "I never can think you would be unfaithful to me; but this must be inquired into. Call O'Brien."

Nurse hastened to execute her mission, and enlightened O'Brien's mind on her way back regarding the state of affairs.

"The saints be about her!" said O'Brien, "shure I niver heard such a thing; but thim hiritics neider fear God nor man."

By this time they had reached Dora's room.

"Was this letter sealed when you received it, O'Brien?" said she.

"It was, plase yer ladyship."

"Who brought it from Ballyrowan?"

"Michael O'Hara, one of the grooms, me lady. I met him in the avenue, and he put it in my hand at oncet, and I carried it up to the house, and the sale was firm, for I was trying to make out the beautiful arms that was on it; and I met Mrs. O'Sullivan at the door, and so, 'What's that in yer hand, Brien?' she said; and says I, 'A lether from Ballyrowan for me lady.' 'Give it to me, thin,' says she, 'and I'll take it up to her room.' So I gev it her, and I seen no more iv id, me lady, sin' that time. Cartainly it's not Mrs. O'Sullivan who 'ud be goin' to open any of yer letters."

This was all of evidence that could be obtained. Dora was perfectly satisfied that neither of her old faithful servants would have committed such an act; but she did not think it prudent to risk an open breach with Miss Beauford by dismissing Harris; she therefore allowed the matter to drop, satisfied with resolving in future to put such breach of trust out of her power, and not a little relieved to find that Lady Fitzgerald's note only regarded an arrangement for a proposed excursion in the neighborhood.

Not so easily, however, did nurse let the matter pass. Her former suspicious dislike of Harris was converted into bitter hatred; and though open hostilities, from different motives,

were refrained from, Harris felt that every motion was watched by nurse with jealous scrutiny ; and a running fire of inuendoes, hints, mock civility, and sarcasm, was kept up perpetually between them. Nurse's large family of children and grandchildren, and all her fellow-servants, shared in this antipathy ; for though nurse was too prudent to mention anything she had seen or heard, she often solaced her feelings by giving hints concerning spies and informers, whch were not without due effect on the irascible minds around her.

Things could not, however, long continue in this state, and they were brought to a climax one day by nurse discovering Harris on her knees, with her ear applied to the key-hole of her lady's sitting-room, where Dora was conversing with Lady Fitzgerald. Nurse's footstep startled her ; she turned, and their eyes met. Without a word, but with a glance which bespoke hatred and defiance, Harris rose and swept past, before nurse had time to utter a word. An hour afterwards they met in the passage that led to the housekeeper's room ; nurse dropped a low courtesy, "Will ye plase, Mrs. Harris, to walk wid me into Mrs. O'Reilly's room?—the tay is ready, and Mr. O'Brien's there, and we'll have a plasant talk togither over our lady's affairs."

"Certainly, Mrs. Nurse," said Harris, tossing her head, "I am quite ready to come to tea at the proper hour, though it yet wants a quarter to it ; but I think we may find more suitable matter of conversation."

"I am glad to hear ye spake the word, Mrs. Harris. I was only tryin' to larn manners from yees, and I thought it might be the English fashion ; but I'm obliged to yees for infarmin' me that it's what servants have nothin' to do wid, unless their lady 'ud be spakin' to thim, and tellin' thim what she plases ; but do you know, Mrs. Harris, I oncet was passin' thro' the passage, by me lady's door, and I saw one of the girls, perhaps that wild thing Katy Riley, kneelin' at the door, and her ear close to the kay-hole, and me Lady Fitzgerald was wid me lady

at the time? I think if I might be so bould, it would be well for ye, that always trates me lady wid such respect, to be stoppin' up the kay-hole on the other side."

"I'll leave it to you, Mrs. Nurse, to interfere with such concerns; as for me, I am content to take charge of my own department."

She was about to pass on, but her eye at this moment caught the round face of O'Brien, puckered into various lines of malicious diversion, peering from behind the half-open door of the housekeeper's room. She returned the glance with one of haughty contempt, and with a bitter laugh, slowly ascended to her room.

Nurse consulted with O'Brien and the housekeeper, in both of whom she had great confidence, regarding what measures were best to be taken in the present emergency. To suffer a heretic spy to continue about their lady was a measure none of them would contemplate for a moment.

"It's no use telling the praste," said O'Brien, "for he doesn't like my lady to be wid the family at Ballyrowan at all, at all. I seen that from the first, and I thought it was all along to their being hiritics, till I seen that he was just as ill at her bein' wid Sir Eustace as wid the ladies; and he has a mighty love for that black-hearted hiritic, and won't belave a word agin' her; for, says I to him the other day, 'I wish, your rivirence, id mayn't be a spy that Mrs. Harris is,' says I. 'Hould your nonsense, O'Brien,' says he, 'she's a good woman, and will make a good Catholic yet; don't ye see she's arnest in larning our religion?' and indade I couldn't deny it, for I seen her oncet in the dark night, when I had forgot to lock the great gate, and rose about two in the mornin' to do it—and when I pushed the door of the praste's room, there was the light burnin' in it, and his rivirince sitting convartin' her. Iv coorse, I didn't listen to none of their talk; only I heard some word about the interests of the Church; and what but the care of her sowl was takin' her there on a dark night?—but that's not to be thought

of, if she's after doin' our lady a mischief, the false-hearted hypocrite that she is."

Mrs. O'Riley was a shrewd, observant woman, strongly attached to Dora. "I'll tell ye what; the sooner that woman's away from my lady the bether," she said.

"Thrue for ye, Mrs. O'Riley," said nurse, "and some of the boys had just be better givin' her a warnin' to quit, and not be throublin' his rivirence about the matter."

"The thing's done," said O'Brien, with a knowing wink; "she'll take shippin' from Cork wid her band-boxes before three days are over her head."

CHAPTER VII.

"It is, indeed, a mighty sorcery
That doth inthral thy young heart, my poor girl!"

COLERIDGE.

On the following morning, as Mr. Mowbray was passing to the chapel, he was met by Mrs. Harris, who begged a moment's audience. The poor woman was pale as marble, and shook from head to foot The priest saw at once that something had excited her terror, for she was a person of strong nerve, and generally dauntless courage. "Come with me to the chapel," he said, "I will hear you there." They entered. Mrs. Harris closed the door, and, looking carefully around, satisfied herself they were alone, and began her tale:—

"I have been faithful, father, to the charge with which you intrusted me, and obedient to the will of the Church; but I implore you would suffer me to return to England, and select another in my place." She stopped, and trembled violently,

for her terror appeared by turns to render her eloquent and speechless—then drew a paper from her bosom, and presented it to the priest. It contained a brief warning to quit the station within three days, or a wooden gown would be prepared for her accommodation.

"Ah! I must find out who is the author of this," said the priest, thoughtfully; "in the mean while, do not be alarmed—keep as much as possible to-day near Miss Mowbray, and to-morrow after service, I shall find out who is the author of this, and secure your safety; indeed, I do not think you need be afraid, for I believe this is only an idle threat, never meant to be executed."

"I cannot say, father; for mercy's sake let me depart!" exclaimed the poor victim of terror, falling upon her knees, and clasping her hands in an agony of supplication. "For the love of the Holy Virgin do not ask it—I shall die if I remain here—they will murder me—oh! they will murder me;—I had a fearful warning last night in a dream."

"Go then," said the priest, assuming an aspect of stern solemnity; "go with the curse of the Church resting on your head—go with the gallows-tree before you, to die unshriven and unblessed."

"Hold, father, hold!" cried the wretched woman, with a shriek that made the vaulted roof ring again, while she put her hands before her eyes, as if to shut out some dreadful apparition.

"Have you not absolved that sin? surely *that* does not lie upon my soul; oh! it is only that absolution, father, that has kept my brain from madness—recall it not!"

"I do not recall it," said the priest, "while you remain obedient to the Church; but I solemnly denounce upon you the penalty of excommunication, if you now in one step transgress my commands."

She was silent—a look of exhaustion succeeded to that wild agony that had convulsed her features; a chill dew gathered on her forehead, and she leaned against the altar railing. "It is

done, father," she said, in a low voice, whose tone of hopeless despair told of the apathy with which, at that moment, she looked upon life or death, "I will obey."

"Swear it," said the priest, "by the holy cross."

She pressed her lips on the crucifix which he held towards her—"I swear."

"Intrust your safety to me," said the priest, while an expression of malignant satisfaction lurked in his eyes. "The blessing of the saints, of the Holy Virgin, be upon you, my daughter—retire."

She lingered, and seemed unable to rise from the step of the altar on which she had sunk—the pangs of remorse were piercing her heart—"Father, I would confess."

A look of impatience crossed his face as she spoke, but he returned to his seat. "Be brief, my daughter; the hour of morning service is at hand."

The wretched woman poured forth the burden of a conscience seared, but not relieved—of days of agony and sleepless nights, haunted by the spectres of the past.

It was an oft-repeated tale, and the priest heard it not. His mind was busied, while she spoke, with plans of intrigue, and schemes for the perfecting of his designs. His brow was knit, his lips compressed, and his cold eye gazing into vacancy; but her voice ceased, and he was suddenly recalled to the present.

She raised her eyes, now moist with tears, to his face, and a sense of relief passed into her burning heart, when she thought it was her sins and sorrows that thus filled his thoughts.

He laid his hand upon her head, and rapidly pronounced the absolution.

She eagerly drank in every word, as if the salvation of her soul hung upon the lips of him before whom she knelt. Then rising, she crossed her hands upon her breast, bowed low, and withdrew.

Dora was to dine at Ballyrowan that day, and remain over the night. Harris accompanied her, as nurse was confined by

an attack of rheumatism. Dora went to the old woman's room before leaving Carlington—"Good bye, nurse!" she said, "take care of yourself, and be well when I return."

"And it's not ayont Monday ye'll be stoppin', asthore?" said nurse, rather anxiously.

"No, I shall certainly not be longer; but what is the matter, and why are you anxious?"

"Nothin' nothin' darlint. Oh! there's a word I must be afther spaking wid ye before ye go;—is the door shut, acushla?"

Dora shut it, and then returning to nurse's bed, bent down over her.

Nurse drew her head still lower, and spoke in a whisper, "Ye see if it wasn't for yerself, dear, it's not an informer I'd be turnin', nor a spy neider; but if ye'll just be seein' that the doors are shut, before ye'll be convarsin' wid her ladyship or Sir Eustace, and be kaping the kay of yer disk in yer pocket, and lave nothin' about ye not like to be knownst, for it was thruth and no lie that I tould ye about her rading the lether; and I seen her too, listenin' at yer door, whin ye was convarsin' her ladyship yesterday."

"Why did you not tell me this before, nurse?"

"Becase I did not like to be throublin' ye, darlin', and I was always takin' care for yees myself; but now I could not let ye be goin' widout me, and that woman doin' what she plased, till I had given you the warnin'. Now, farewell, cuishla machree, and the blessin' of the Holy Virgin be about ye," she said, hastily, as she heard a footstep passing the door.

During her lonely drive, it suddenly flashed upon Dora's mind that her uncle had lately appeared to know many little incidents which he had not learned from herself, and she remembered that at the moment a sensation of surprise had been excited by his knowledge of them. These were for the most part things which had been written or said by Lady Fitzgerald and herself, and the coincidence of these having transpired, with nurse's report, irresistibly struck her mind. She immediately banished the

thought, however, for she could not for a moment suspect her uncle of any connivance with a waiting-woman ; and had Harris been a Catholic, the circumstance might easily have been explained by supposing she had mentioned them in confession, and her uncle had allowed them to escape—but her being of the Protestant religion forbade this idea. Satisfied, therefore, that the coincidence was merely accidental, she dismissed it from her mind. She did not so easily, however, get over the disagreeable sensation of having such a character constantly about her. Her first impulse was to dismiss her, and a few months ago this would at once have been acted upon ; but the fetters that bound her had been riveting more closely, and the priest had acquired a sway against which the natural strength and independence of her character could no longer stand ; not that the will of a mere man thus fettered her—had her mind been enlightened to see that it was [illegible] she would at once have burst the bonds, and her strong spirit [illegible]ain been free—but superstition was the assailable point of her character ; and the priest, directing all his influence with reference to this, had undermined the strength that would otherwise have opposed an invincible barrier to his power.

The calm smiling aspect of Ballyrowan chased away the gloom of Dora's mind, yet the traces of it were not so entirely banished as to hide from Lady Fitzgerald's eye that something had distressed her. That expression was now becoming habitual upon the once sunny brow of her niece. Anxious to discover its cause, she accompanied Dora to her room at night.

"Who is your new attendant?" said Lady Fitzgerald, as Harris left the room ; "and what has become of your good old nurse?"

"She is unwell, and I therefore brought Harris. She was Miss Beauford's maid, but my aunt has kindly given her up to me, as she thought it necessary I should have some one of greater experience."

"She *is a singular*-looking person," replied Lady Fitzgerald ;

"one cannot look at her without interest, and yet of the most painful description."

"Yes," said Dora, "she is a character I cannot understand; she appears to possess strong feeling, and yet is utterly inaccessible. I do not understand her any better now than the first day I saw her. I cannot trust her, and I feel she does not love me, yet I am sure she is capable of strong attachment."

"I should think so; her deep dark eyes, and the whole cast of her countenance, bespeak great intensity of character, but I never met with any one so unquestionably handsome, who excited such mingled feelings. But it is not of her I came to speak; tell me, my child, what is distressing you; for I can read in that brow of yours there is something annoying you."

"I am a little annoyed," said Dora, smiling; "though I think I must have allowed the annoyance to weigh too heavily upon me, since you have traced it so easily."

She then related what nurse had told her

"It is very annoying, certainly," said Lady Fitzgerald, when Dora had concluded; "and your position is difficult; because, though you dismissed her from your own service, you cannot send her away. Still, you would be more able to guard against her intrusion in that case, and I should hardly think Miss Beauford capable of retaining one who could act thus towards you."

"Oh! [illegible]!" said Dora; "she would only attribute it to my unfounded prejudices, and would become the more attached to her."

"Her personal attendance you should not retain for an hour," said Lady Fitzgerald.

"I dare not give her up," replied Dora, in a melancholy tone. "Miss Beauford would complain to my uncle of my self-will, and I would be obliged to take her back again."

Lady Fitzgerald made no reply for a few moments.

"My dear child," she said at last, in a grave, affectionate tone, "it is a miserable thraldom which binds you. I have watched for some time its progress in enchaining your mind, and

I cannot any longer be silent. You know that I would not encourage what I also see to be the fault of your character, but I would implore you to let your whole heart and mind bend in subjection to the will of God, and not to the will of a man erring and fallible as yourself. You are responsible for the exercise of your own conscience and judgment; and remember, these, enlightened by the Word of God, must be your guides."

"I know, dear aunt," replied Dora, "that the Protestant faith teaches you thus to act; but Catholics have an infallible guide in the Church, and are not left to their own erring judgments; and O! what matters it," she said quickly, while a sudden animation brought a flush upon her face, and her eye kindled—"what matters it though body and spirit be martyred here, if the soul be saved eternally?"

Lady Fitzgerald looked at the young enthusiast with a feeling of melancholy interest.

"We cannot agree upon this subject," said Dora, after a few minutes, "so do not let us speak of it. You must not," she continued, almost shuddering, "be my tempter; for, remember, the admission of a single doubt to me is sin, and must be confessed to my uncle."

Her aunt sighed—she felt that the time was not yet come when Dora's mind could open even to consider the truth. She only said, as she pressed her to her bosom, and bade her good-night—"Would to God, my child, that you confessed to Him who alone hath power on earth to forgive sins! I will not cease to pray that His light may shine into your heart."

Long after her aunt had left her, Dora sat by the fire, buried in profound thought. Suddenly she started from her reverie—"Oh, this is sin! this is sin!" she exclaimed, half aloud; "this rebellious heart that will struggle to be free—that will rise up with a determination to judge, think, and act for itself—and this continual sense of guilt!" She threw herself upon her knees before a crucifix. Long and bitter was the conflict in her mind. For some moments she felt determined to preserve

the sanctuary of her inner self uninvaded; her soul rose in utter detestation of the iron yoke of confession; but each thought and feeling that thus rebelled was a sin to be confessed, and she writhed in agony under its guilt. The morning dawned ere, wearied in body, though somewhat calmed in mind, Dora lay down to seek the rest she required; the morning was advanced ere she awoke—she felt feverish and unwell, but, summoning Harris, prepared for her return to Carlington in time for the morning service, as it was Sunday. When she attempted to stand, however, she became so faint, she was obliged to lie down, and abandon all thoughts of returning that day. She remained in her room, where her aunt visited her, but did not attempt to renew last night's conversation.

"Do not attempt to come down to dinner, my love," she said as she left her; "you are really not able; and Cecilia and I will spend the evening with you."

"No; I should like to join you—I think it would do me good. My headache is better, and I shall go into the garden before I dress."

Dora was turning into the shady walk leading to the garden, when she was joined by Sir Eustace, who had caught a glimpse of her as he entered the avenue, on his return from chapel.

"Are you better, Miss Mowbray?" he inquired. "I delivered your message to Mr. Mowbray, and he says you must not return till the cool of the evening to-morrow."

This was a most welcome reprieve; but Dora felt surprised, as it was so very unusual a thing for Mr. Mowbray in any way to prolong her intercourse with the inmates of Ballyrowan. Whatever his motives, however, might be, his conduct was satisfactory; and she almost began to question whether she had not too hastily judged him in supposing he wished to separate her from those to whom she was so strongly attached.

"A singular incident took place after service to-day," said Sir Eustace. "The people were about to disperse, when Mr. Mowbray, in a voice of thunder, desired them to remain, and

announced from the pulpit, that a wicked and malicious threat, affecting the life of a member of the household, had transpired, and that, on the penalty of the Church's curse, he commanded the person who had written the letter, with all coadjutors, to come to confession this evening at eight o'clock. He desired whoever came, to enter by a private door of the vestry, and promised secresy and absolution in the event of a full disclosure."

Dora looked thoughtful and distressed.

"I cannot imagine who has done this," she said. "It is not so difficult to guess at whom their threats are aimed, for my maid is an English Protestant, and very obnoxious to them; but I did not think that any one at Carlington could have threatened so sanguinary an act."

"Most probably it was meant as a threat only," said Sir Eustace, smiling. "As I came out of the chapel, I overheard a few words of conversation between O'Brien and Lanty, which let me into the secret at once. 'There's no use in id,' said Lanty; 'since his rivirence has taken a fancy to her, I suppose she must stop.' 'Is id to tormint our lady out iv her sinses she'll stop?' said O'Brien; 'there be other manes of frightenin' her besides this.'"

"O!" said Dora, hurriedly, "I wish you had not told me that. Should anything of the kind happen again, I shall be obliged to confess to my uncle my knowledge of the agents; and if these poor people really only mean to frighten Harris—not to hurt her—I could not bear to bring them into disgrace."

"How can you be so fettered by superstition?" said Sir Eustace, gravely. "Do you not feel that moral obligations are higher than ceremonial? It is your duty, as the head of your household, to take effective means for the protection of every member of it, and, if you really think your maid in danger, to place her beyond the reach of it, and punish those who threaten her; but it cannot be duty, under any circumstances, to betray the secrets of others, which have accidentally come to your knowledge."

Dora was silent; an anxious and troubled expression clouded her countenance.

"Yes, you are right," she said. "Where obedience to the Church does not interfere, nothing else can set aside the sense of moral obligation."

"But the moral law is eternal. No command of the Church can supersede it without proving itself iniquitous."

Dora did not reply. It was not the first time they had spoken upon this subject, and she shrunk from entering upon any argument. Her own clear mind felt the force of the appeal, and she dreaded the sin she thought implied in the admission even of its possible truth.

"But it is only by confession," she said quickly, "that the boundaries of good and evil can be clearly defined to our minds; everything, therefore, must be laid before the priest, that he may judge, and absolve us from the guilt, conscious or unconscious, we may have contracted."

"The light of conscience is quite sufficient to form a barrier between good and evil," said Sir Eustace; "and our own judgment must discriminate which way to choose. Is it possible you can yield your belief to the figment of priestly absolution? How can any man remit the sins of his fellows?"

"Hush," said Dora, with a look of alarm; "I trust I do believe it; do you not?"

"Do not think I would disturb your faith," he replied; "you know I, as well as yourself, am a member of the Catholic Church."

At this moment they were joined by Lady Fitzgerald and Cecilia. Dora was silent and abstracted during the remainder of their walk; the conflict between a clear and vigorous intellect and the deep-rooted superstition which held so powerful a sway over her whole character, was becoming so strong as to disturb the happiness of even her brightest hours.

In the evening she told Lady Fitzgerald what had occurred at Carlington, and, from an undefined feeling of anxiety regard-

ing the state of matters there, she hastened her departure early next morning.

The first person she saw on her arrival was O'Brien, looking extremely mysterious and important.

"Are you all well, O'Brien?" she said.

"We are, plase yer ladyship; and nurse is bether, and at the chapel yesterday—but she's gone to-day, ma'am."

"Gone! what do you mean?"

"Why, ma'am asthore! his rivirence gave her notice to quit, and she's away up to the cabin on the hill."

Dora restrained herself with difficulty while in the servant's presence. She entered the library, and found the priest alone. Slightly returning his greeting, she immediately inquired for nurse.

"I have been obliged to send her away," said the priest; "I find she has been concerned in the plots carried on against Harris; and such a person, you will surely allow, is unfit to be about you any longer."

"I would require further knowledge of the circumstances, before I could pronounce such a judgment," said Dora, haughtily; "and whatever they may be, no one has a right to judge for me in this matter."

"You forget, I think," said the priest, sternly, "that, while you are the temporal head of this house, its spiritual care is intrusted to me. You may peril your own soul by disobedience, but I shall take care that the souls of others are not sacrificed."

"I desire not to interfere in your spiritual authority, but the exercise of a secular power I will not permit; too far has this interference gone already."

Dora's spirit was roused to the highest pitch by this attack upon her nurse, and every feeling that would have made her submit was overborne by the torrent of indignation. The priest saw this, and knew it was not the time for contest. Assuming, therefore, an air of sorrow—"Retire, my daughter," he said, "and mourn in secret over that indomitable spirit which frus-

trates all my efforts for your salvation. Return when you have seen the sin of your conduct, and by confession and penance merit absolution. But remember how fearful will be your state were death to come upon you in the midst of this wilful rebellion."

He turned from her, and appeared the next moment engrossed in a large folio that lay open before him.

Dora remained rooted to the spot. There was a short but sharp conflict—superstition prevailed, and silently she left the room.

The priest had not been prepared for so determined a rebellion. He sat for some time meditating on the best means of bringing so indomitable a spirit under control.

As soon as Dora left the library, she ordered the carriage, and drove to the cottage where nurse had found shelter. The old woman was confined to bed, and really ill. The poor creature was overjoyed to see her child—kissed her hand again and again, and wept until Dora was fearful of the effect upon her weakened frame.

"My heart's blessin' on ye, cuishla machree; I niver expected to see yer blessed face agin; but to think ye would come to the ould woman in spite of them all! I'm good for no more now, dear, and I'll not be long here, for shure only to wait on ye and tend ye was there any use for such an ould crathur as me; but ye'll come and close my eyes, my blessed child, will ye not? and whatever they'll be tellin' ye, remember it's the thruth I've spoken, dear."

"No, no! you must not die, nurse," said Dora, with much emotion; "you must live for my sake, and come back to the Castle when you are well."

"Blessin's on ye, vein of my heart," exclaimed nurse, suddenly starting up; "and it is back to yer ounself ye'd be takin' me? Ah! shure, thin, I could go every step of the way back on my bended knees this blessed day, for shure it's my life that ye are, and the sight o' yer sweet face makes me well again. But oh!

no, no, mavourneen," she continued, in an altered tone, as she sank back upon her pillow ; "it's the praste that has done it ; sorra a step can ye go agin' his rivirence widout the throuble overtakin' ye, and would I be the one to bring throuble on my heart's darlin' ?"

Dora was silent. Nurse's words accorded but too well with the convictions of her own mind, now that the excitement of anger had in some degree subsided. The spirit of submission to the Church was resuming its sway, and she dared not to carry out the plan which, half an hour before, she had fully resolved upon.

"I will pray and do penance, nurse, until you are restored to me," she said at last, devoutly crossing herself—"the Holy Virgin and the saints be favorable to us !—and I will come and see you every day But how did all this happen ? why were *you* told to leave the Castle ?"

"Shure, my lady," said Lanty, who had entered the cottage a few minutes before, and remained standing at the foot of the bed—"shure, an' I'll tell yer ladyship all about it. It was on Saturday evening, ma'am dear, I was jist laving the Castle to come home to the little girl there," looking at his wife, "whin O'Brien called me back. 'I have something to say to ye,' says he. So I turned. 'You love the lady, Lanty ?' says he. 'Wid the sowl in my body, I love her,' says I. 'And ye'd be ready to sarve her ?' says he. 'Wouldn't I be walking to Lough Derg on my knees, if it 'ud do her good ?' says I. 'Ye know that furriner that's been waiting on her,' says he. 'Bad cess to her,' says I ; 'id's I that's wishing her out iv ould Ireland.'"

"Stop, Lanty," said Dora ; "don't tell me anything you would not wish Father Adrian to know : for in confession I must tell him all."

"Thank yer ladyship kindly ; but all I was afther tellin' yees, ma'am, Father Adrian knows already ; for we've been to confession, both me and O'Brien, and our mother there too ; and we told his rivirence all, and he gev us absolution, only he said

the pinnance upon us, by making us walk upon our bended knees with pase under thim—saving yer ladyship's presence—he would not spake the absolution at all, at all, widout it. But I must tell yer honor: says O'Brien to me, 'Will ye help me to give her a lift out of the counthrie, thin?' 'Wid all my soul I will,' says I. So O'Brien wrote the lether, my lady, for he's a fine schollard, but we weren't manin' no ill to her at all, at all, only to send her out iv the counthrie. So he gave me the lether, and I carried it to the town wid me, and slipped it into the bag wid the lethers. My grandmother there, plase yer ladyship, knowed nothin' till it was done. I tould his rivirence so, but he said she must go for all that; so there's an ind of it, my lady."

"And I hope an end to all such warnings for the future, Lanty. I know love to me prompted it; but when I want to part with any one, I can do so without such means."

"Yer pleasure shall be done, my lady," said Lanty, "if it were to harbor all the hiritics in Ulster."

Dora's meditations during her drive home were none of the brightest. She felt the utter hopelessness of the struggle she had begun; for, though no light motive would have induced her to submit to authority so unjust, she dared not to peril her soul by rebelling against the Church. She passed a wretched night, but arose in the morning determined to sacrifice every feeling rather than remain disobedient. The conscience which God has given for the internal guidance of each human being, she committed to the keeping of one fallible as herself; and the free will, which is our natural birthright, she laid in the dust, to be trampled on by a usurped authority. She spent the early hours of the morning in devotion, and went to the chapel rather before the usual hour for morning service, where she found Mr. Mowbray alone. His quick glance at once discovered the state of her mind. One dying throb of pride agitated Dora's bosom, as she stood in hopes of his first breaking the silence.

"Father," she said at last, "will you hear my confession?"

"Not at present, daughter—the hour of morning service is at hand, and various duties engage me. Spend this day in solitude, let its hours be given to prayer and meditation; and in the evening, when I return from Ballinasloe, I will hear you; at eight o'clock, meet me here."

He turned from her, and with a swelling heart she retired to her accustomed place in the chapel. The task before her was now more than ever difficult—for time had been given for the feelings of nature to revive yet; the guilt of unpardoned sin hung heavy upon her spirit during the hours of that long and weary day, and the aves and paters that she repeated sufficed not to calm her troubled heart.

In the afternoon, she heard the sound of horses' feet in the avenue, and saw Sir Eustace and Cecilia approach. She had desired O'Brien to deny her to every one, and with a sigh of disappointment she lingered by the window, that she might at least see them retire. They had ridden into the court, however, and did not immediately return. Presently she heard O'Brien open the door at the end of the gallery leading to her room, and, in a low voice, call "Kathleen." This was the girl that now supplied Harris's place in attending on Miss Beauford; but her attachment to Dora was by no means extended to her new mistress, and O'Brien, with the usual tact of his countrymen, readily turned to her in the absence of nurse, to perform any service he believed would be displeasing to the opposite faction.

"Here, Kathleen, carry this to her ladyship."

This order was followed by the sound of Kathleen's light foot in the passage.

"His lordship Sir Eustace, and Miss Fitzgerald, are here," she said; "and the lady sent that note to yees, me lady." Cecilia had written a few words on her card—"Can you see us, Dora? we wish you to ride with us to the Banshee's cave, and return home to dine at Ballyrowan."

The temptation was great, but Dora did not even hesitate.

"I cannot come, dear Cecilia," she wrote; "nor can I see

you. Do not think me unkind—I will explain another time." Kathleen tripped away with her message. In a few minutes Dora heard the sound of horses' feet, and she watched the equestrians down the avenue with a heavy heart. She almost wished Cecilia had come to her instead of writing. One look of her sweet blue eyes would have comforted her on this cheerless day. She was anxious, too, about nurse; the old woman had appeared really ill, and she knew she would be wretched if she did not see her. She went to the library, and rang the bell for O'Brien.

"Send to nurse's cottage, and tell her I will not be able to come to her to-day. Get some tea and sugar, and meat for soup, from Mrs. O'Riley, for her; and if she is not better, let some one go to Ballinasloe for Dr ——."

O'Brien retired, well pleased with his commission.

"She's a jewel of a lady, so she is," said Mrs. O'Riley, as she packed a small basket with the luxuries Dora had ordered.

"Ye may say what ye plase, Mister O'Brien, about yer religion, but to my mind, I think the praste has over much to do in this house. I lived ten years with a Protestant family afore I came to these parts, as you've heard me tell, and I'd like to see whin his rivirence, the chaplin—that was a D.D., out of Trinity College, too—'ud be afther dismissing me lady's maid widout her consint, or my lord's gintleman eider."

"Whist, will ye, Mrs. O'Riley," said O'Brien, with a knowing look at the door, which had been left ajar. "I'm thinking there are some folk about the house have ears that 'd hear from this to Cork"—lowering his voice to a whisper. "It's not but ye may be right enough, alanna—for it's ye that has the books larnin', and in troth it's meself that has no cause to be shaking my shilala in defince iv the praste, and me's walkin' these two blissed days wid my brogues full of the hard pase till I'm hardly able to set thim fornint the ground; however, his rivirence is at Ballinasloe, and I'll jist be taking the baste down to Mrs. *O'Sullivan's meself.*"

"Vinasthru! but that's hard on ye, man alive; shure I can call the crathur Lanty to bring a handful of the boiled ones that wis set by from the dinner; and be slipping them ye have into the ashes."

"Well, thin, it's ye has the sowl of a tinder-hearted woman in ye"—cutting a figure in the air, which was followed by a contortion of visage, as he lighted upon his hard soul-expiators. "Shure it was pase his rivirence mentioned, but he didn't say whether soft or hard; but I'll just be afther changing them now, Mrs. O'Riley, if ye'll be so kind."

Mrs. O'Riley rang a bell, and desired the servant who answered her summons to bring her a cog of pease. The change was soon effected. O'Brien emptied the contents of his shoes in a corner of the stable-yard; and, considerably relieved in his physical sensations, he hastened to saddle a horse for his errand.

Late in the evening, with spirits depressed and wearied by internal conflict, and her body exhausted by a longer fast than she had ever before endured, Dora met the priest according to his appointment, for confession. While she confessed the conflicting feelings that rent her soul, he read, without her perceiving that he did so, its innermost secrets. She ceased—he pronounced the words of absolution, and she was about to retire.

"Stay, my daughter," he said, in a tone of such unusual softness, that it soothed the misery of her heart; "do not think, my weak and guilty child, there is any lack of tenderness in my heart, when my earnest striving for your soul's good leads me to be thus severe. Often, while a peaceful sleep visits your pillow, the morning dawn finds unbroken the vigils I have kept for you; and not a tear of penitence falls from your eye, that wrings not a drop from my heart, which would suffer to its last throb for your salvation. Oh! my daughter, of all those committed to my care, you alone, the child of my sainted brother, are dear as his own flesh and blood to the lonely old man. For your own sake, then, and mine, listen to my warnings, and sacrifice this sin lying between you and salvation; think of the fires

of purgatory, of centuries of unexpiated sins, and of sufferings such as you would tremble to hear me tell. How light is all that you may endure in pursuing on earth a course of self-denial and virtue, provided the necessity of these purifying fires are superseded, and an entrance afforded you into the joys of heaven! The excess, my daughter, of your anger on the removal of your attendant, proved to me how necessary her removal was; that old woman did more than all my prayers and efforts, and your own, were able to counteract, to foster in you the spirit of self-indulgence and self-will. Be thankful that, in parting from her, you have been permitted to make a sacrifice which will advance you many steps nearer your sanctification, and atone for the guilt you have incurred. Happy are those who, by a life of such acts, lay up a store of good works sufficient to redound to the good of those who live in the world!—but make it your care, while you are in the world, to emulate the virtues of the sainted beings who retire from its temptations."

Dora wept. During the last twelve hours her sufferings had been dreadful, and the deep tone of tenderness that now addressed her fell like dew upon her wearied spirit. The extraordinary fascination the priest exercised, not only over her mind, but her feelings, resumed its fullest sway; and the heart of the lonely girl clung to her only guardian with a love that, for her character, lost none of its power from the strange combination of superstitious veneration and fear with which it was blended.

Father Adrien saw his advantange, and pursued it.

"Rest, my child," he said, "in the knowledge of my love—a love stronger than ever filled the heart of an earthly parent for his child, for it is the tie both of an earthly and a spiritual father that binds me to you—rest in me with the fullest confidence that my very soul yearns for your happiness; and to win it, not in time only, but in eternity, I count all labors, all sufferings, all privations light."

He laid his hand on Dora's head as he spoke, and pronounced

over her a benediction so solemn and tender, that her whole frame trembled with emotion. For a few moments after he had ceased, she leaned in silence on the rail of the altar—then rose and withdrew. Unwonted tears fell from her eyes as she passed through the long corridors on the way to her room. She was deeply touched by the priest's kindness—solemnized, almost terrified, on the one hand, with the fearful pictures he had drawn of the horrors of purgatory; and attracted, on the other, by the tenderness which, combined with his authority as a priest, promised both comfort and safety. She felt at once driven and allured to throw herself upon his care, and leave him to deal with her as he would, so he accomplished, at last, the work of which he had taken the responsibility—her soul's salvation. The fire blazed in her room, and the curtains were drawn, when she entered it, but it seemed lonely; and she missed the affectionate face and kind, cheerful tone of nurse O'Sullivan, who in many a cheerless hour had revived her with her sympathy. She felt unwell and very much exhausted, and, throwing herself into a chair, had just strength to ring the bell before she fainted. When she recovered, Miss Beauford was bustling about her—some one was supporting her head; she unclosed her eyes, and met the deep, fixed gaze of Harris. A sensation of mysterious awe and repugnance thrilled through her frame. She closed her eyes, and moved from Harris's arm to the pillow, when she again fainted. Miss Beauford, alarmed into something like kindness, supported her, and held a cup containing refreshment to her lips; even this exchange, when consciousness returned, was a relief.

"I always said no good would come of your rides about the country, and your going out in the night air, and all your ways, Dora," said her aunt, as her fears faded before her niece's returning animation. "In my time I was accustomed to see young ladies sit at their embroidery frames, or take a walk, attended by a maid or footman; but young people now-a-days think themselves wiser than their elders; but come, you had

better try to eat something now, my dear." Dora tried to comply, but she was sick at heart. Miss Beauford summoned Harris to undress her. Too faint and exhausted even to express a wish to be alone, Dora remained passive; and at last, to her inexpressible relief, when her aunt had arranged and directed all according as she thought proper, the lights were removed, the final good-night said, and she was left to repose.

She could not sleep; so she rose after a while, and withdrew the curtains, and then lay down, gazing out upon the quiet moonlight, till the peace of nature stole into her heart, and a dreamy slumber at last stole over her.

CHAPTER VIII.

"My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail,
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavor,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west.
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life whose fountains are within.

COLERIDGE.

NEXT morning, before Dora rose, a note was brought her from Lady Fitzgerald. The sudden illness of a near relation had summoned them to England, and ere this reached Carlington, they were on their way. The letter dropped from her hand, and she sank on her pillow—her only friends, then, were gone.

The note was full of affection, with promises to write, but fixed no period of return, and a long, uncertain separation was before her—a feeling of hopeless desolation pervaded her heart—an agonized sense of desertion, which she did not at that moment trace to its source.

Weeks stole on, and the gloom of external nature was added to that which reigned in the halls of Carlington. Autumn winds were sweeping the leaves from the trees, wild storms beat on the shore, and from time to time tidings of shipwreck and tales of death and terror were brought to the Castle, and formed almost the only incidents in Dora's monotonous existence.

There were no tidings of the return of the Fitzgeralds to Ballyrowan ; indeed, for some time Dora had received no letters from her aunt or Cecilia, and at times the thought that, amid new scenes, they had forgotten her, would shadow with a morbid power her exhausted mind. She saw almost no society, for the neighborhood was not thickly peopled ; many of the surrounding proprietors were absentees, who only occasionally visited their estates, and with those who remained her intercourse had gradually become limited to an occasional forenoon visit. Her life was spent in one unvarying round of occupation—day after day wore an unbroken uniformity of aspect ; even the relief afforded by her visits to nurse's cottage was for the time suspended, for by the advice of Mr. Mowbray, the old woman had made use of her restored health in a pilgrimage to Lough Derg, and, worn out with exertions unsuited to her age, had been taken ill at the house of a relation who lived near it. She might indeed have had the society of Miss Beauford, who, regularly as the clock struck eleven, took her place in the drawing-room with her embroidery frame, and sat there immovable until the hour for luncheon—then resumed her place till one hour before dinner, unless the fine weather induced her to take a promenade up and down the terrace. Had she felt that Miss Beauford's comfort depended at all on her society, she would gladly have spent some hours in talking or reading to her ; but Miss Beauford cared not for reading, and never conversed ; and, as she had long ere now relinquished the hope of training Dora to what she considered the proper habits of a young lady, her presence was rather a source of irritation than pleasure. When Dora's morning readings were over, she usually took refuge in

the music-room; and there, with doors shut, to exclude her from all the roving world, she found, in the flood of melody, that channel for her feelings which human sympathies denied her. Then, when the tints of the autumn twilight stole over hill and wood, she went out accompanied only by her faithful dog, and wandered to the sea-shore, where she would sit with her eyes fixed on the moving tide, dreaming the hours away, till recalled by the darkening shades of night, to hasten back in time for the hour of dinner.

To that hour the priest's society lent an unfailing charm. The seasons spent with him, whether in the humiliation of the confessional, or in social intercourse, possessed for Dora a mysterious charm. These hours alone aroused her from the dreaming torpor that had begun to freeze the springs of life; and, deprived of all other society, each day drew more closely the links of the chain that bound her.

CHAPTER IX.

"Oh! mark'd and singled was the hour when first
He met mine eye!—Sickness and grief just then
Had pass'd away; from long, long suffering freed,
I lifted up my brow, and silently
Gazed upon life again. The sunny day,
. . . . . made a light
Of gladness round me, and my freshened heart
Drank the rich healing balm of hope once more;
Then onward through the glowing world I dared
To send my glance. . . . . .
. . . . . .
And my soul clung to him e'en then, O friend!
To cling for evermore."

GOETHE'S "TASSO."

THE autumn passed slowly and heavily, and Dora watched with dread the gradual shortening of the days that would de-

prive her of the long wandering rambles in which her oppressed heart found its only sense of freedom and repose. She heard nothing during this time of Lady Fitzgerald or her family ; and the conviction that, amidst scenes and friends who had older and stronger claims than she could have, she was forgotten, or at most, remembered with but a passing emotion of kindly feeling, gained strength, and added to the sense of desolation that, like a bleak north wind, daily blew more chillingly around her. Morning after morning, as the break of day dispelled her troubled slumbers, she woke to feel again the heavy weight of oppression that, even in sleep, was scarcely forgotten. As the day advanced, her spirit bore calmly and firmly the load it had resumed. Sometimes, when alone, a hidden spring of feeling was touched, or a chord of association awakened, and a passionate burst of tears would relieve for a few moments her sad heart ; but this was very rarely. Often the strong hopefulness of her young spirit would burst its bonds, and look eagerly around, as if from some greater source *must* come relief—but relief came not ; and night fell again upon her soul's darkness ; —nor was it until nature was exhausted that the tardy refreshment of sleep gave her a short cessation from her sorrow.

At last she felt as if her power of endurance were nearly gone, when a ray of light, she hardly knew from whence, suddenly streamed into her mind. It was a ray of hope in God. She thought that He might perhaps relieve her. She knelt, and implored Him to send her some consolation ; and then, rising with a strengthening hope glowing at her heart, she took her usual solitary path to the sea-shore.

It was a chilling afternoon, late in October, but Dora felt not the bleak wind. She sat upon a rock that overhung the tide, her eyes dreamily gazing into its troubled depths. She was not aware she had lingered there for hours, and that her hair and clothes were wet with the damp of evening. Fidèle was not, like his mistress, absorbed in reflection ; and for some time, by sundry low whines, had intimated his desire that they should

return home—but he was wholly unheeded; suddenly he paused, and, sitting upright, bent his head in a listening attitude, uttered a short bark, and plunged into a neighboring thicket. The next moment Dora heard a well-known voice speak to the dog, and Sir Eustace stood before her. Her welcome was very calm; but, as he took her hand, and, drawing it within his arm, turned to accompany her towards the Castle, a sense of protection and repose stole over her spirit.

"Have you been ill, Miss Mowbray?" said he, anxiously; "you are sadly changed since I saw you last!"

"No," replied Dora, "I have not been ill; but tell me about my aunt and Cecilia—have they returned also?"

"No; I left them in England. My mother talks of passing this winter in Paris; but have you not heard from her? I know she wrote to you."

"I never received her letter; indeed, I have not heard from her for several months."

"Most extraordinary!" exclaimed Sir Eustace; "she has written repeatedly, and, receiving no answer, has lately been very anxious about you."

"I wrote," said Dora, "frequently, until about a month ago. I then began to fear," she added hesitatingly, "that my letters tired my aunt."

"How could you think so?" asked Sir Eustace. "I know you will forgive me if I speak with too much plainness, but I am sure you have been unhappy. I have been deeply anxious about you, and many things have lately contributed to make me increasingly so. The tone of the few letters we received have been constrained and melancholy, and what you now tell me appears inexplicable You know I have often tried to guard you against the extent of an influence that I saw was enslaving your judgment and paralyzing your mind. I have seen much of the Catholic priesthood—what, perhaps, disposes me to less unlimited confidence in all its members than you now feel. I should wish you to regard them as the ministers of religion, not as

arbiters of conscience. When I left Ballyrowan, I did so with anxiety, for I saw that the net was drawing close around you, and your letters have since confirmed my fears. After we had for some time vainly expected an answer to my mother's last, I determined to come here, and ascertain the cause of your silence."

Dora did not answer; these last words increased the delightful sense of protection which she always felt in Sir Eustace's presence.

"But Mr. Mowbray is the guide appointed me by the Church—upon him lies the care and responsibility of my soul's salvation. How then can I yield too implicitly to his commands? He is the representative of the Church to me, and if I disobey him, it is at my own peril."

"You remember, dear Miss Mowbray, I once said to you before," said Sir Eustace, gently, "that the moral law is our only immutable guide. A visible church exists on earth for the purpose of instructing the world in the nature and obligations of this law; but if that church, or any of its ministers, issue a command antagonistic to the law which they are bound to expound, their claim to regard at once ceases, and in obeying them we disobey the Author of our being."

"But if our judgment at any time disagree with our spiritual guides," said Dora, "it must be because we are blinded by sin. Our only safety lies in following implicitly the counsels which cannot err."

Sir Eustace did not at this moment judge it wise to combat further this belief in the Church's infallibility.

"Remember," he said earnestly, "the conscience and judgment of each individual must be his guide. If you transgress the dictates of these, you are not guiltless. Do you not see to what fearful injustice and slavery of mind a contrary belief would lead?"

His words struck home to Dora's heart, for she remembered her nurse. Sir Eustace saw the expression of her countenance,

but without knowing its cause. He read, however, that his arguments were not without influence, and earnestly pursued his advantage.

"I am anxious," he said, "most deeply anxious, to preserve your mind from such inthralment, both for your own sake, and for that of those committed to your charge. I have marked the gradual progress of this influence over your mind, and I dread its fatal results. But I must not tire you with these grave discussions; only promise me that you will think of what I have said, and test it by the light of unbiased reason. Pray tell me, what was the result of Mr. Mowbray's examination, which I remember, was to take place the day I last saw you?"

Dora shortly repeated the circumstances which had taken place since his departure. Sir Eustace listened with interest; and, had she looked up when she came to that part of her story which told of nurse's expulsion and her first visit to her cottage, she would have seen his deep searching eye fixed upon her, as if it would read into her very soul.

"And is it possible," he exclaimed, almost sternly, as she paused, "that you have been thus far misled? Have you suffered the word of a man to make you thus unfeeling and unjust to one so devoted to you?"

He stopped; for tears, which few things had power to call forth, rose to Dora's eyes.

"Do not blame me," she said, in a tone of deep distress. "Oh! you know not how it wrung my heart to part from her! She was my only comfort; but alas, alas! I know not what to do! What is right? where is truth?" she exclaimed; and, stoping short in their walk, she leaned against a tree, and wrung her hands in an agony of feeling, not foreign to her impassioned nature, but which no human eye since her childhood had before been permitted to witness.

Sir Eustace was grieved, but not surprised, at the emotion he had excited.

"Let us seek truth together, dear Miss Mowbray," he said,

gently. "You are too young, too sensitive, to contend alone with the stormy elements that surround you. Let me be your friend and protector."

In her dismay at the sense of her forlorn weakness, she raised her eyes to the face of Sir Eustace. She saw he was pale, and struggling to conceal an emotion he could not master. Suddenly the consciousness that she was loved rose like a mighty flood of joy from her inmost soul, flushing with deep scarlet even her marble brow. She wept. Sir Eustace had already taken her hand, and pressed it silently to his lips. The sun, which till then had been imprisoned by the dark autumn clouds, sent its rosy beams along the surface of the ocean, giving a transient summer glow to the stately trees and mossy rocks; and no sooner had this only witness to vows of eternal fidelity gone down with its testimony in the mighty deep, than a bleak north wind arose, and, sweeping over the sea, crested its blackening waves with foam, while the tall forest trees groaned and shivered in the blast, and, bending almost to the earth, showered their seared leaves over Dora, as, shielded by Sir Eustace, she stood beneath their shade.

Again Dora knelt in the solitude of her room. Her prayer was heard—her consolation was come. Joy intense and unutterable flooded her soul, and her grief had passed as dreams of the morning.

It was late ere she descended to the drawing-room. When she entered, there was a flush on her cheek, a radiance in her eye, that attracted even Miss Beauford's attention.

"Your long walk has not fatigued you, Dora," she said. "You look uncommonly well to-day. I wish you would have some compassion on others. It is a quarter to eight by my watch, and dinner has been waiting three-quarters of an hour."

"So Sir Eustace has returned to Ballyrowan?" said the priest, as Dora took her place at the head of the table, the full blaze of the light streaming upon her.

She did not answer, but the flush deepened in her cheek as the priest's searching gaze was fixed upon her, and he was satisfied. Dora was unusually silent during the hour of dinner. Mr. Mowbray and Miss Beauford conversed, but she heard not what they said. Wine and fruit were at last placed upon the table, and the servants withdrew. Her attention was at last attracted by Mr. Mowbray mentioning the name of a family he had been visiting that morning, in which she was interested.

"I have been down at Noddy Neal's farm this morning, and have had a very painful duty to perform there; but one must obey the commands of the Church, at whatever sacrifice of feeling. The poor fellow asked me some time ago for a dispensation of marriage to Mary Cormack, O'Brien's niece, but I would not give it, for they are first cousins. To-day the poor fellow told me that Mary, they fear, was going into a decline. He looks almost broken-hearted, and entreated me, if there was any means of getting the dispensation, to get it for him. I went afterwards to Betty Cormack's cottage, and found the poor girl in a very drooping state. Poor creatures! I would do much for them, but I dare not peril their souls' salvation for the sake of their happiness on earth."

"You were perfectly right," said Miss Beauford. "If people bring on unhappiness by their own ill-regulated feelings, they must bear the consequences."

The priest passed on to talk of other things, but his observant eye had marked the sudden change in Dora's countenance, from its bright flush to a death-like paleness—from the light of joy to the chill of despair; an intolerable sense of faintness overpowered her; black mists swam before her eyes; and the words which spoke her death-warrant rang in her ears. Hardly conscious, she raised to her lips her untasted wine; it revived her, and, by an effort which had become too habitual, she immediately regained composure, and, though pale and heart-stricken, yet, during the rest of the evening, she appeared as calm as usual. The long, lonely hours of that night

witnessed a war between the now fully developed elements of conflict When she thought of her own happiness only, she could have sacrificed that with all the heroism of a self-devoted martyr, and stilled her young heart, with its glowing affections, into the joyless calm of a hopeless resignation; but the image of Sir Eustace rose before her; the upbraiding tone of his deep voice thrilled again upon her ear as he inquired, "Can you be so cruel and unjust to one so devoted to you?" And she felt that she could not be false to him. But could she place her own soul, and, far worse, his, in danger of eternal misery, by disobedience to the Church? this, oh! this thought, was agony beyond endurance.

As morning dawned, a faint hope stole over her spirit. There might be means of obtaining a dispensation. She would tell all to her uncle, and rely upon his aid. Somewhat tranquillised by this resolution, she rose, and met the priest at breakfast with her usual calm sweetness of manner. He seemed anxious to interest her in conversation; and there was a tone of compassionate tenderness in his voice when he addressed her, that carried almost instinctively to her heart the conviction that he pitied her.

"I wish to speak with you alone, Father," she said, as he rose to leave the room.

He stopped, and fixed upon her a mild but penetrating gaze —"To confess, daughter?"

"No," she said hastily; but her eye fell beneath his, and a deep blush colored her pale cheek. For a moment she was silent. She felt a hidden meaning in his words. It was as if he read her heart; but the next instant natural conscience asserted its right to justify her. She arose, and said calmly, almost proudly, "No, not to confess, Father, but to consult you."

"I will be with you, then, daughter, in a few minutes, in the library."

He left the room, and Dora retired to the library.

A solemn stillness reigned over the Castle, broken only by the

slow ticking of the great clock in the hall, and the fitful sighing of the wind as its wild gusts swept the autumn leaves against the windows. Dora was familiar with these sounds, for often they were the only ones that broke the dreary stillness of Carlington; but on this day they thrilled upon her excited nerves with a hardly endurable power. She seated herself in the deep embrasure of the window, and unconsciously fixed her eyes on the torrent at the foot of the rock, which on this side of the Castle was precipitous. Mingled visions were floating through her mind. Father Adrien, with his mysterious power—the power of fear—yet blended with a strong irresistible attraction, formed, at first, the prominent object in her musings; and even in solitude the undefined sense of guilt his words had awakened, again dyed her cheeks with crimson. Then, like a ray of summer sunshine, Ballyrowan arose before her as she had seen it in the bright brief dream of yesterday, but a deep gulf since then had opened between her and that haven of repose, and she gazed on it now as on a paradise she might never enter. Mr. Mowbray's approaching footsteps startled her from her dream. Her heart almost ceased to beat, for upon his fiat hung the happiness of her future life. He took a chair opposite to her, and calmly waited for her to open the conversation.

"You are aware, Father," she said, with a forced calmness, "that Sir Eustace has returned to Ballyrowan. Since he came, I have learned his attachment to myself; and but one obstacle now prevents our union."

"But that barrier is one which it would peril your soul to overpass. Oh! my daughter, I have unconsciously suffered you to hover on the brink of a fearful precipice; but, thanks be to the Holy Virgin, it is not yet too late. I did not dream of danger in suffering you to enjoy the society of one whom I believed you only could regard as a brother. But you must see him no more!"

Dora shuddered. "Father! is there no means?"

"Ask me not, my poor child," said the priest, in a tone of

mournful compassion, while he took Dora's white and lifeless hand in his. "The price of such a permission would be, not your earthly possessions, but your soul's salvation. Now are the ways of life and death set before you. By this one act of self-sacrifice you may secure for ever your peace with heaven. But, oh! if you turn back—if you sell your soul for this world—then, my child—my unhappy child—would that I had died before I had seen this day!"

He covered his face with his hands; and Dora marked the swelling of the veins in his pale forehead, and heard the low groan, which she believed the utterance of compassion for her.

"But there may be hope, Father! A dispensation may be obtained?"

"I say not, daughter," said the priest, raising his face, still working with emotion—"I say not that it could not be. There have been—there are—cases in which, for the good of the Church, and from circumstances rendering it expedient, such dispensations have been granted. But such a case is not yours. To me has been committed the care of your soul, and all your temporal and spiritual interests. Upon me lies the awful responsibility of your salvation, and I cannot endanger it by granting this dispensation. The physician who withholds the cooling draught for which his fevered patient longs, does not say that such relief is never administered to the sick; but he will not give it when he knows it would destroy life: therefore, my daughter, I cannot give this dispensation to you; and if you seek it by other means, the sin of rebellion will be upon your soul, and sink you into perdition!"

The priest arose as he spoke. He appeared to have overcome the conflict of feeling; and when Dora raised her eyes to meet that stern, unrelenting gaze, she felt that there was no hope. For some time both were silent. At last the distant tread of horses' feet broke the stillness. Dora knew the sound. Human affection again overflowed her heart, and swept back the influence which had so nearly gained the mastery. "I care

not—I care not, Father!" she exclaimed. "I will risk all; but I am determined not to part from him."

"Infatuated being!" exclaimed the priest, sternly; "will you destroy his soul with your own?"

The words struck like an icebolt on her heart. She sunk at once, an unresisting victim, into the power of the priest. His quick eye marked the change, and he followed up his advantage.

"Retire to your room," he said authoritatively, yet with more gentleness of tone. "I will see Sir Eustace. Fear not, daughter; this noble sacrifice which you have made on earth will be rewarded in heaven."

He raised his hands, and pronounced a solemn benediction upon her head. She bent to receive it, but, as she did so, turned her eyes upon him, with a gaze so earnest, so beseeching, yet so full of hopeless misery, that a pang pierced even his heart as he turned away.

CHAPTER X.

"Night spreads her mantle o'er the sky,
And all around are sleeping;
While I, in tears of agony,
My restless couch am steeping.

"I sigh for morn—the rising day
Awakes the earth to gladness;
I turn with sick'ning soul away,—
It smiles upon my sadness."

DALE.

SIR EUSTACE waited, full of hope, in the saloon. The door opened, and he turned to meet Dora, but Mr. Mowbray entered. He gravely returned Sir Eustace's salute. "I regret to say Miss Mowbray is unwell to-day, and unable to see any one."

"I trust her illness is not serious?" inquired Sir Eustace, anxiously.

"The consequences may be serious," said the priest, sternly. "She has suffered from the effects of her late walk yesterday evening."

Sir Eustace started, but commanding himself, said coldly, "Has Miss Mowbray told you the subject of our conversation?"

"She has told me all," replied the priest. "I thank Heaven that her perfect confidence in him to whom the Church has intrusted a charge so precious, has enabled me to save her ere it is too late. It is by her desire that I now meet you. She is convinced of the guilt that would attach to her union with one so nearly related, and implores you, for her sake, to refrain from importunity that would only dis ress, but could not move her, and to leave this place in peace, without seeking a meeting that could only be agitating to both."

"No," replied Sir Eustace, haughtily, while his features quivered with suppressed emotion; "I will not leave her, until from her own lips I have heard her free and unbiassed decision."

"You shall not see her," replied the priest, passionately. "Our holy Mother Church has intrusted me with the care of her soul, and, so help me Heaven, I will fulfil the trust. Sooner would I lay her in her grave, than see her your wedded wife."

A deep flush mounted to the brow of Sir Eustace, and his eyes flashed fire; but, without any other reply than a cold and slight bow, he left the room.

In the hall he met Harris; and, hastily writing to Dora a request that she would, if possible, grant him a few moments' interview, he desired Harris, whom he believed to be a Protestant, and therefore free from Father Adrien's control, to carry it to her mistress.

She returned ere many minutes had elapsed, and told him that Miss Mowbray desired her to say she was too unwell to see any one that day.

Filled with indignation, pity, and a firm resolve that he would

not leave the unfortunate girl in the power of the priest, Sir Eustace mounted his horse, and rode from the Castle.

Dora was startled from a sort of stupor into which she had fallen, by the sound of retreating horses' feet, as Sir Eustace galloped away. She knew not how the hours passed of that long dreary day. For a time she felt sunk in the listless despair which knows neither hope nor fear. The strong power of reaction in her young spirit was not yet wholly broken; and a faint whisper of hope would make itself heard. Long as the day seemed, she was startled when the hour came for dinner. She shrunk from the idea of again meeting Mr. Mowbray—but still more from suffering him to read the internal struggle of her feelings. In silence, she descended to the library, with a brow and eye so calm and cold, that no one less practiced than Father Adrien in the study of human hearts could have traced the hidden fire beneath.

"The Holy Virgin smiles upon you, my daughter," he said, when she entered; "her intercession has not been in vain. I see already the expression of that peace which is the inheritance of those who resign their will to hers."

A wintry smile passed over Dora's face. The priest continued —"I explained to Sir Eustace your motives and feelings; he was satisfied, that, great as is the sacrifice you are both called upon to make, your decision was right. I think you will agree with me as he did, that it is better, for the present, you should not meet."

"I do," replied Dora, bitterly; "but the proposal, I think, might have been suffered to come from me."

"It should have been so; but Sir Eustace expressed his wish that you should not meet again."

"His wish shall be gratified;" and she turned haughtily away, as if willing to end the conversation. She bent over a volume she had opened. Her dog followed, and fawned upon her.

"Down, Fidèle, down!" she exclaimed, impatiently, and pushed him with violence from her;—he whined.

"Fidèle, my poor dog!" she exclaimed, and she bent over him till her dark ringlets rested on his jetty coat. When she rose, her features were calm as before—but a single tear glistened on Fidèle's head. The momentary shadow of distrust had passed from her heart, and from that hour, through all the storms that raged around her, Dora's faith in Sir Eustace never for one moment swerved.

Early on the following morning, Dora rose. The storm, which had raged with unusual violence during the night, was still; but a dull heavy rain was slowly falling, and weighed to the earth the little foliage that still hung on the trees. The scene was too meet an emblem of her gloomy lot. She was startled from her reverie by a knock at the door.

Kathleen entered. Looking cautiously around, as if afraid she should stumble on the dreaded Mrs. Harris, and assured at last that Dora was alone, she drew forth a note which she had concealed.

"Shure, ma'am, it's a note from his lordship Sir Eustace, that O'Brien gev me to bring up to yer ladyship. He bade me give it into yer oun hand, and the groom's waitin' below."

She retired.

As Dora's eye glanced rapidly over the paper, a light of hope rekindled there. He besought her to pause in her decision, to suffer him to appeal to the higher authorities of the Church, and wait for their sentence, before she took a resolution that would make him miserable for ever. He implored her to see him once again before he left Ireland, and, whether in presence or absence, to let nothing shake her confidence in his love—to believe nothing but what she heard from himself.

"I knew it," murmured Dora, while tears of relief filled her eyes. "I knew he could not fail me. My uncle must have misunderstood him."

No thought that he had deceived her for one moment intruded into her mind. She rang a small bell that stood beside her, and Kathleen re-entered.

"Say that the answer will be sent in the afternoon, Kathleen," she said.

For one moment the impulse to answer had been almost irresistible, but it was immediately checked. The sanction of the priest must be given to whatever she replied. But even the cloud which this thought threw over her hopes, could not altogether damp them. Whatever might be the result of her conversation with Mr. Mowbray—whether the sacrifice begun must be completed—whether a bright future might yet dawn upon her—one well-spring of joy at least flowed full and free. The assurance of his love nothing could now make her doubt of, and in this confidence she was happy.

The priest was alone when she entered the breakfast-room. He was reading a letter deeply bordered with black, and turned towards her with an expression of solemn tenderness on his countenance.

"I have heavy news for you to-day, my daughter. Your venerable mother in God, the Abbess of St. Cloud, is no more!"

"Is she gone? my kind mother!" exclaimed Dora. "Ah! Father, I have lost a true and tender friend."

She took the paper which he held towards her, and, retiring to a recess in the window, perused with intense interest every particular relating to the closing hours of her venerable friend. When she had finished, she covered her face, and remained long silent, buried in thought too deep for words.

"My daughter," at last said the priest, gently laying his hand upon her shoulder—she started—"you have not lost a friend. A life of holiness and self-denial, such as your venerable mother led, must have secured to her a speedy entrance into immortal happiness. Instead then of possessing a distant friend on earth, you now have a powerful intercessor in heaven. She can now see you, and hear your voice. Rejoice in this, my child; and oh, seek that her pure eye may see you pursuing that path of virtue in which she would have led you on our earth, that she may only receive such prayers to present for you

as those with which her own holy intercessions can mingle and enforce."

Miss Beauford at this moment entered, and by a strong effort Dora regained her external composure, and took her place at the table. Father Adrien gave the letter to Miss Beauford, and conversation turned exclusively upon the merits of the departed Abbess. Dora took no part in it; her heart was too sick for words. She followed the priest from the room after breakfast; he turned—

"Would you speak to me, daughter?"

"I would."

He accompanied her into the library.

"I have received a letter this morning from Sir Eustace Fitzgerald," she said, calmly. "He asks an interview with me before leaving Ireland."

"And speaks of obtaining a dispensation from the Papal court," interrupted the priest, quickly. "Daughter, you have done well to tell me. Turn thus at all times from the voice of the tempter to the sheltering bosom of the Church, and you will be safe. Even now that departed saint, who guided your youthful footsteps in the way of truth, looks down with approbation on the course of her child."

He paused for a moment; but Dora remained silent, pale, and cold as a marble statue; she seemed to have lost the power even to feel or speak.

"You know," continued the priest, "that Sir Eustace, as well as yourself, is under my spiritual control. If you then permit him for your sake to enter into an open rebellion to the Church's authority, vested in me, you tempt him to perdition—you urge him to everlasting destruction."

Dora shuddered.

"This ensnaring letter answer quickly, my daughter," said the priest, taking her hand; "tell Sir Eustace Fitzgerald that you will pray for him. Urge him to seek, by confession and penance, the *Church's* forgiveness for the thought of his heart.

Tell him what fearful sin he would tempt you to commit; that neither gold nor prayers may win the Holy Mother's consent to her children's destruction. Then persevere calmly in the course of lofty self-sacrifice you have begun, and a crown of glory awaits its close."

He was turning away.

"May I not see him?" said Dora.

"No!" replied the priest, sternly; "infatuated girl! can you pray 'lead me not into temptation,' and yet throw yourself into the midst of its very fires?"

He turned abruptly from her, and left tne room. Dora's brow was burning; her very brain was fevered; she opened a glass-door that led to the terrace, and passing out, unsheltered as she was from the cold of the early winter, she descended the grey stone steps, and, sitting down, leaned her throbbing brow on the trunk of an old tree. She knew not how long she had sat there, for her reason seemed confused, and a rapid crowd of bewildering images passed in quick succession through her mind; one moment she saw Sir Eustace betrayed and forsaken by her, given up to a life of hopeless misery—then happiness smiled around them together in their home at Ballyrowan; but images of horror succeeded—a death-bed unabsolved by the Church—his voice reproaching her as the cause of his ruin—and the terrific fires of purgatory consuming the soul of him she loved!

She was startled from the terrific vision by the voice of the priest—"Dora, the messenger waits for your reply."

She turned. He almost started at the death-like paleness of her features—the wildness of her eye.

"For what?" she said, vacantly.

"Your note," he said, taking her hand; "is it ready?"

"I have not written," she answered quickly, recalled to the remembrance of his meaning. They entered the house together. He placed writing materials before her. She turned abruptly, and fixed upon him her large brilliant eyes.

"*I will not* write what you wish."

"Write instantly, I command you!" he said sternly, clasping her arm with violence. "Are you determined to destroy his soul with your own?"

She seized the pen, and, in hardly legible characters, wrote a few lines to the priest's dictation.

He took the letter from her passive hand, and left the room, to give it to a servant who waited. As he closed the door, a sudden reaction of feeling overswept Dora's soul. She had done it—she had placed the barrier which was to sever her for ever from all she loved on earth. One thought, one determination alone possessed her—to destroy that barrier—to retract that decision, whether for happiness or misery. She started from her chair and followed the priest; she met him re-entering the hall. At this moment she heard the sound of horses' feet, and knew that the messenger was gone.

"Stop him, Father, stop him!" she exclaimed; "call him back; I will not send that note."

The priest led her forcibly into his private room.

"Let me go, let me go!" she cried, violently breaking from his grasp; "you shall not detain me."

"Be calm, Dora," he said, as she would have rushed past him; and forcing her down upon a chair, he closed the door.

"You shall not!" she exclaimed. "Cold, perfidious despot as you are, you have tyrannized too long."

"Be still!" he exclaimed fiercely; "cease your blasphemous revilings. The curse of this Church you are despising may fall upon your devoted head. Are you prepared to brave for him and yourself a life unsanctified—a death unabsolved?"

Dora trembled, and was still.

"Remain here," said the priest sternly, "till I return;" and abruptly left the room.

Dora remained where he had left her, almost stupified for some time. She was incapable of thought or recollection, but a vague sense of terror at length took possession of her soul; the threatened curse of the priest rang in her ears, and all earth's

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interests failed before her while she shrunk in horror at the thought of the eternal ruin she might bring upon Sir Eustace and herself. The short excitement of feeling had subsided; and, exhausted in mind and body, she was ready to submit to any terms Father Adrien might propose, in order to secure her reconciliation with the Church she had perhaps irrevocably offended. She was hardly aware how much time had passed, but saw that the shades of evening were darkening around her, when the priest re-entered. He carried a light in his hand; he raised it, and standing in front of her, gazed steadily a few instants in her face. The downcast eye, the languor and exhaustion of her whole appearance, told him that this conflict was over.

"Go to your room," he said; "remain there till midnight, then hold a vigil alone in the chapel, and, in prayer and penitence, seek to expiate your error."

Dora gazed silently upon him as he spoke, and when he finished, mechanically obeyed. A strange sense of loneliness came over her. All was quiet around. Only the occasional opening or shutting of a door broke the silence. She tried to read, but the pain in her head was too violent—she closed the book, and, rising, undrew the curtains, and for some time gazed on the dreary starless night. Tired and exhausted, she waited for the hour of midnight. Every sound had ceased; she knew that all were retired to rest, and that she was left alone to keep her lonely vigil. As the great clock of the Castle slowly tolled the hour of midnight, she rose, and, taking a lamp in her hand, proceeded to the chapel. She passed through more than one long passage, and down a turret staircase; when, opening a door that communicated by a side entrance with the chapel, a gust of wind extinguished her lamp. A thrill of horror ran over her frame; she would have turned to rekindle it, but the hour of her vigil had already commenced, and she dared not infringe upon it;—she entered the chapel, the cold moonbeams *streamed through* the arched windows, falling upon the monu-

mental tablets, and brought into vivid relief white marble statues which stood in niches of the wall. The dim figures in the moonlight seemed to move, and the echo of her own footsteps startled her. Shuddering with terror, she knelt before the altar—a dead stillness reigned around—that silence which gives birth to strange unearthly sounds. She repeated the prescribed form of devotion mechanically at first, but gradually its sacred meaning penetrated her heart, and elevated her feelings above the terrors that had assailed her. Her enthusiastic mind found repose in the idea that the beloved dead were watching over her now ; and earthly passions and earthly sorrows were hushed in the calm of that solemn hour.

The clock at length tolled the hour of one, and the vibrations had hardly died away, when a strain of music, soft and sweet, seemed borne upon the air—at first distant, gradually swelling nearer, till its thrilling tones re-echoed from the vaulted roof.

Dora listened, wrapped in ecstacy. As the sound died away, she raised her eyes, and beheld near her, at the side of the altar, a shadowy figure. Well she knew that form—the sable robes, the flowing veil, familiar to her from childhood as the dress of her venerable and beloved friend. Her spirit was pervaded by a holy awe. The figure seemed to glide to her. One hand was extended as if to bless her, the other raised towards heaven. As Dora remained spell-bound—her gaze riveted on the form before her—the figure turned upon her the full light of her calm searching eyes, then bending till the marble lips approached her brow, Dora closed her eyes, expecting that kiss of unearthly love, and her frame quivered with intense emotion ; but only a gust of night-wind sighed mournfully past her—she opened her eyes, and the form was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

"In dungeon darke they long inclosed truthe."

WHITNEY.

A WEEK had passed from the night of Dora's vigil in the chapel without her hearing anything of Sir Eustace. Day by day the hope that she would at least have tidings of him became more faint; and since her mysterious interview with her departed friend, a solemn awe pervaded her spirit. She felt separated from the interests of the world, as if the curtain that divided her from the unseen world had been withdrawn, and happiness or misery for the short period of her early life seemed alike indifferent to her, so she might gain heaven at last; but though her spirit was in this state of unnatural calm, her health suffered severely. A constant fever burned in her veins, and prevented her from joining for more than a few minutes at a time in any of her usual employments. Miss Beauford became alarmed, and advised her niece to confine herself to her room, and have recourse to various nostrums she prescribed. Above all, she implored her to give up the roamings in the woods and by the sea-shore. Mr. Mowbray, whose will she strove to call in when her own efforts were ineffectual, advised her not to prevent Dora's doing what she liked in this matter, but enforced the necessity of Harris's constant attendance, as Dora had lately been subject to fainting attacks. Thus debarred of the free *companionship* with nature which might have soothed her, the *unhappy girl again* sought refuge in the solitude of her own room.

"Was her ladyship at dinner to-day, O'Brien?" inquired Mrs. O'Riley, one evening, when O'Brien sought his usual retreat in her room, after his duties of attendance were over.

"No," said O'Brien, "she has not been down stairs all day. I heard Miss Beauford say to his rivirence, that she was too ill."

"Poor dear!" said Mrs. O'Riley, "they'll kill her amon'st thim; and shure what is it all? for there's niver a word in the Bible, as I can see, aginst cousins marryin'; and shure there's been a dispinsation got many a time afore now; but anyway, the darlint, it's not long she'll be here for thim to tormint."

"Kathleen has been trying to git spache of her these three days," said O'Brien; "but she's not to be seen by no manner of means, for that wicked, desateful woman's niver out o' hearin'. It's my belief, Mrs. Riley," lowering his voice to a whisper, "that she's up to more than Christians should understand; for there's niver the thing done, nor the word spoken, but she knows it all. Though it's said in the cellar, and she in the garret, it's all as one—she'll hear it."

"Shure for you, O'Brien," said Mrs. O'Riley; "but what for was Kathleen tryin' to git spache of the lady?"

"Becase it went aginst my conscience," said O'Brien, gravely, "to be kapin' from her ladyship that Sir Eustace has been here three times, as I tould yees. And the praste bid me say the lady was too ill to be spoken wid, and I'd git no absolution if I tould her a word about it."

"Didn't I tell yees it was a sin," said Mrs. O'Riley, "to be desaving the poor young crathur that way? But it's afeard sometimes I'd be to say all I think to you, or all I know eider, for fear you'd be telling the praste in confession, and so bring throuble on her instead of doin' good."

"Well done, Mrs. Riley! shure it's a hiritic they'll be callin' you, and sorra a word of a lie in it; but anyhow ye need not be feard of my tellin' on ye in confession. I'm thinkin'," continued O'Brien, with one of his knowing looks, "his rivirence is *forgittin' how long* it is since I have been to my duty."

At this moment Kathleen entered; in virtue of her elevation to the rank of Miss Beauford's maid, she was now one of the privileged circle in the housekeeper's room.

"Come away, Kathleen," said Mrs. O'Riley, making room for her by the fire; "have ye heard how her ladyship is?"

"I heard Miss Beauford say she was but poorly," said Kathleen, sitting down; "howsever, she'd be better, poor dear, if they let her have a thrifle of her own way: but if yees could help me to spache of her now, Mr. O'Brien, I's be obleest to ye. I've got a lether here that I wish I could put into her own hand."

Cautiously looking round, she drew from her bosom a letter in Sir Eustace's handwriting, but returned it to its hiding-place as soon as she suffered him to have a glimpse of the address.

"Why, ye see, I've had a guess these two or three days, Mrs. Riley, that my lady hadn't fair play consarnin' the lethers that were sent to her. So, as I couldn't git sight of her—for Miss Beauford says she's not fit to be left alone, and that Mrs. Harris kapes night and day to the dressing-room—I kep an eye on Mounseer, and before dinner I sees him slippin' in wid a lether in his hand. I was goin' to Miss Beauford's room at the minute, and I had a string of her pearls in me hand; and so, as I met Mounseer, I snapt it, and the pearls rolled on the carpet, and 'vinasthru!' says I, 'what will become of me?' and with that he came to help to look for them (for them furriners are mighty pilite), and he put the lether out of his hand on the window. I didn't know if it was from his lordship, but I thought it looked mighty like it, and so I just slipt it in here, and wid that I opened the window, and the wind blew could and sweeping, and 'What are you doin' that for, girl?' says he, starting up quite angry like. 'To air the house, sir,' says I. 'Air the house in a frost like this! Did you see a lether I laid down?' says he. 'No, sir,' says I, quite innocent. 'It's blown away then, it is,' says he, and he swore some heathenish words in an outlandish tongue, which I did not understand—the saints be

praised !—and wid that he ran down and out to look for the lether, and I wint away wid it quite convanient to tell Miss Beauford her necklace was broken."

"Well done, girl," said O'Brien, clapping his hands; "but now, how we're to git the lether to me lady passes my invintion, for that woman kapes as close to her as a shadow."

"Shure she slapes sometime," said Kathleen.

"Never that I can see," replied Mrs. O'Riley; "and there's another thing that I'd like to git tellin' our lady. Lanty was over this afternoon, and tould me Mrs. Sullivan was come back, and she's breakin' her heart afther me lady intirely."

"Bad cess to me, thin," said Kathleen, "if I don't git the lether to me lady afore I sleep, and tell her the news."

"Well, thin, it's a bould spirit of yer oun ye have, Kathleen O'Connor," said O'Brien; "my blessin' on ye for a brave girl, as ye are; but whist, avourneen, for I hear a step comin'."

Harris entered; her dark eye rested on the group with a strange expression, and they could not but feel a secret consciousness that, while they spoke the last few sentences, their voices had been raised rather higher than was safe.

"The evenin' 's cowld, ma'am," said Mrs. O'Riley, with extra civility; "will you sit near the fire?"

"No, thank you," said Harris quietly; "I thought it was the hour for supper, and I have only a few minutes to remain, while Miss Mowbray is in the drawing-room."

"The Virgin be praised she's bether, thin," said Mrs. O'Riley, "the darlint lady that she is. I was afeard she was too ill intirely to lave her room."

"She looks better to-night," said Harris, "and risked to go down for an hour."

"Well thin, ma'am, it's your supper you must have, to be shure," said Mrs. O'Riley, bustling up; "and thrue for ye, it's past the hour. What be them idle crathurs afther?"

They were just sitting down, when a groan from Kathleen made them start.

at's the mather, girl?" said Mrs. O'Riley, and "what's her?" resounded from them all.

it's this murthering toothach that's come on me, sure ." said Kathleen, moaning, and rocking herself. "What relave it, Mrs. Riley, arrah?"

"You'd better go to bed, poor dear," said Mrs. O'Riley, compately. "Shure, I never saw such could weather in ber—it takes hould of one's heart intirely; lie down till cord rings for yees—but won't you take a sup of some-rs?"

"Thank you, ma'am dear, it's not fit to kape my head off I am; and, rising, she made good her exit, while the servant, wholly unsuspicious that she was the cause of ess, politely rose to open the door for her. The mo- closed, Kathleen suddenly recovered from her pain, and along the passage, she entered a corridor through which must pass on her way to her room. She concealed herself hind the niche of a statue. Certainly Kathleen had never ll so long before in her life, for she had remained im- for nearly an hour, when, to her inexpressible delight, ssed alone.

't be frightened, ma'am dear," she whispered, before she out of her hiding-place. Dora turned, and the girl's ate heart was pained when she saw the paleness of her ce, and the melancholy expression of her eyes. She seen her for some days, and even that short time had a change. She came cautiously but quickly out of at.

ou plase, ma'am dear, Mrs. Sullivan has come back, and y bad intirely, and breakin' her heart afther yees; and lether from his lordship," she continued, putting it into , "but, plase, ma'am, don't spake the word to his riv- at I tould her ladyship, for he tould us, that's O'Brien, thin' at all, at all, about the lethers Mounseer's been nd I tried to get spache to yer ladyship these three

days, but Mrs. Harris was either walkin' wid yer ladyship, or she tould me you were asleep, or too ill to be spoken wid."

Kathleen's eloquence was at this moment cut short by the sound of Harris's footsteps, and before Dora had time to make further inquiries regarding what so nearly concerned her, Kathleen disappeared at one end of the passage as Harris entered by the other. She hastened to Mrs. O'Riley's room, and nearly stumbled against the good lady, who was coming out with a cup of posset in her hand, on her way to inquire for her.

"Bless me, Kathleen, where are you running to, girl? I was jist comin' to your room to look afther yees."

"Oh, I'm very well now, ma'am, thank you," said Kathleen; "it's jist the cowld I got wid looking at Mrs. Harris; but as soon as the door was betune me and her, I got well intirely, ma'am asthore."

"You've been afther some mischief, I'll go bail," said O'Brien, as Kathleen, somewhat chilled by her long waiting in the corridor, stood by the fire to warm herself.

"Well, shure, Mr. O'Brien, the praste niver gave me iny orders, and I'm not obleest to know thim as he gev to you," said Kathleen, briskly. She then at full length recounted her adventure, and had hardly finished, when the sound of Miss Beauford's bell summoned her to an attendance which her heart by no means prompted.

"There, that's Miss Beauford's bell," she exclaimed, moving reluctantly from her snug corner. "If it was my oun lady, wouldn't I go from this to Cork on my knees to sarve her; but it's mighty cowld sarvin' the hands give when the heart don't warm thim; and sure I've tried to do that same too, but it bates me intirely; she's so cross and sharp on me, that it bothers the life out of me day and night."

Dora concealed the note at Harris's approach, for she did not wish to betray the faithful girl, but she had not the slightest intention of reading it without the sanction of the priest. She sought him *early on* the following morning.

"I received this note yesterday, Father."

"From whose hands?" inquired the priest, quickly.

"Do not ask me that question; it is of no consequence."

The priest did not urge it. He had heard from Antonio of the loss of the letter, and concluded that one of the servants had picked it up, and brought it to their lady; and though he would have been glad to know which had dared to transgress his orders, he was aware of Dora's extreme recoil from anything like a breach of trust, and did not wish at this time to urge her too far.

"You have done well at once to bring me this. Be firm, my daughter; a few more efforts, and the conflict will be over—the sacrifice perfect. I will write to Sir Eustace, and implore him to cease these endeavors to draw you from the path of duty. Fear not lest I should be harsh. My heart bleeds for him, and with all the tenderness of a father to his erring child do I seek his restoration."

The priest was suddenly called on that afternoon to visit a sick parishioner at some distance. Dora had not for some days left the house, so he went with less anxiety than usual. He was not aware that Dora had ordered the carriage that afternoon to drive to nurse's cottage. When she met her aunt at luncheon, she mentioned her intention, and was rather astonished at the look of consternation visible in the old lady's face.

"Harris will go with you, then," she said. "I would go myself, but this damp weather makes me suffer so much from rheumatism, that I dare not venture out."

"Oh, I do not want any one, thank you, aunt. I feel perfectly well to-day."

"You must not go alone," said Miss Beauford. "It would be extremely wrong. I am sure you cannot object to Harris accompanying you."

"I should rather be alone," said Dora, decidedly. "I dislike the attendance of any one, except when illness requires it."

Her aunt saw that any further expostulation would he utterly vain, and relinquished the point.

It was one of those mild and genial days that in the early winter look as if they mourn the departing summer, and forbore to destroy the lingering traces of its beauty. As Dora drove slowly along the sea-beach, the soft air fanned her fevered brow. The influence of nature brought a soothing calm to her spirit which she had not known for many days. When she entered nurse's cottage she found the old woman supported by pillows in an easy chair, but the moment she saw Dora, she sprang from it, and, throwing herself on her knees, clasped her arms around her with almost frantic joy.

"And is it yerself I see, vein of my heart? I'd thought these ould eyes would niver behould ye more. Thanks be to the Vargin and all the saints; they have granted my prayer, and now I'll die contint."

"No, you must not die, nurse," said Dora, raising and leading her back to her chair; "you must get strong, and live for my sake. I have missed you sadly while you were away."

"Blessin's on ye for that word, cuishla machree," said nurse. "Thin it's of some use the old crathur is in life still; and shure, dear, wasn't the station made for yerself? and if the flesh is worn off my body in prayers for yees, it's I that am proud and glad to spind it."

"And you have hurt your health for my sake?" said Dora, much moved by the devotion of her faithful old friend. "You must get well again soon, or I shall never cease to reproach myself."

"Whist, dear," said nurse, whose reference to her own sufferings had been wholly unconscious—"whist, dear, and niver think that I've suffered at all; for shure its young I grew agin whin I was sayin' the aves and paternosters for my child."

Dora stayed with nurse till the thick coming shadows of night warned her to return to the Castle.

The old woman appeared uneasy during the visit, as if she

had something on her mind she wished to say ; and it was only when Dora rose to take leave, she ventured to say, as she pressed her hand to her aged lips—

"Ye're lookin' pale and very ill, cuishla machree ; ye're changed sin' I left you, and I'm afeard there's heart-throuble in it. Chear up, darlint, for the Vargin and saints will help ye yet."

She paused, but looked as if anxious to say more ; but Dora only pressed her hand in silence as she left the cottage.

The moon had risen, and its floods of light had irradiated every object around. The deep hush of nature was broken only by the gentle rippling of the waves on the shore, and the low sighing of the night wind as it whispered among the tall tree tops. A sense of freedom and repose while thus alone with nature refreshed Dora's weary spirit ; and, unwilling to break the spell and return to her dreary prison life, she desired the carriage to drive round by the road and meet her at the gate, about a mile distant, while she took a well-known and favorite path through the woods. She had walked slowly on for some time, when she came to a stile, leading into a by-path from Carlington to Ballyrowan ; it was one that in happier days she had often traversed in company with Sir Eustace and Cecilia. She stopped and leaned upon the stile, while thick coming thoughts agitated her mind. Suddenly she heard the sound of horses' feet approaching, and the next instant Sir Eustace emerged from among the trees.

"Dora !" he exclaimed, in a tone of mingled tenderness and grief—"I thought you were ill ! Heaven be praised that I see you once more ! Oh, how could they deceive me thus !"

He had dismounted while he spoke ; and taking her passive hand, while she stood silent and unresisting, hardly conscious for a few minutes of aught but that she was with him again—

"Why have you refused to see me, Dora ? why have you suffered others thus to separate us ?"

"*I have not* refused to see you," said Dora, faintly.

"Were you not, then, told that I have been again and again at Carlington? that I had written to you? They told me you were ill—that you could see no one. But one word—one line—could you not, at least, have sent me that?"

"I received no letter or message from you until last night."

"And you returned it unopened," said Sir Eustace, reproachfully. "Dora, I would not thus have persevered in the determination to see you once again, but that I thought you were deceived. Had I known that you acted from your own free choice, I would not have intruded upon you as I have done. But you once said you loved me, and I cannot forget these blessed words. In mercy to one whose life is blighted without you, do not suffer the word of a man to sever those whom Heaven has united!" He paused. "Speak, Dora," he said again—for, pale and trembling, she remained unable to utter one word—"Speak, Dora, but one word. Tell me you have changed, and I will leave you for ever. I will trouble you no more, but leave you to seek the happiness which may be yours—a happiness my lonely life can never know!—But you are not changed; I see—I feel it!" he exclaimed, clasping her hand in both of his. "Speak but one word, Dora!—say you love me still, and all the powers of heaven and earth shall not separate us."

"Hush!" said Dora, at the sight of his agitation recovering her own composure.

"No!" he interrupted, vehemently—"speak! you must answer me!"

"No," said Dora—"no, it cannot be. Heaven itself has forbidden our union. Listen to me." She stepped a few paces back; and, leaning on a tree, clasped her white hands on her bosom, while the moonbeams, streaming through an opening in the branches, clothed her pale features and statue-like form in an almost ethereal beauty. "Listen to me! On the day when I wrote to you I had received the final decision of the Church against our union. Yet earthly feelings were not altogether stilled; and the thought would present itself that you might

obtain the dispensation refused to me. In this state of mind I went to keep a vigil in the chapel, as Father Adrien had directed me. While I prayed, a stream of soft unearthly music stole through the chapel. I opened my eyes, and the form of my venerable mother in God—the Abbess of St. Cloud—stood before me. One hand she stretched out towards me—the other was raised to heaven. She signed me with the holy symbol, and bent her pale lips towards me But while I expected the unearthly token, the form passed away. The next day I told Father Adrien; and he said she had been sent from heaven to consecrate her child to the service of the Church; that she had pointed to the skies, to show me that my rest was there; and had signed me with the holy cross, in token that I must bear it contentedly on earth. He would have had me at once to retire to the convent where I was reared. But her sainted lips once told me that all who were designed by God to the life of a nun received from Him an external call which was the sign of their vocation. I believe her words were truth, and this vocation is not mine. I purpose, with the aid of the Virgin Mother, to devote myself to the service of the Church. I will live secluded at Carlington, and, in works of charity and self-denial, prepare for that rest which, I trust, awaits me—where earthly storms shall rage no more.—And now, farewell! When you are happy, and can think of me as a sister, we may meet again. Meanwhile, my prayers shall rise to heaven unceasingly for you."

"Dora!" exclaimed Sir Eustace, vehemently, as she paused, "believe me, this vision was but a well-devised scheme of Father Adrien, more completely to secure your submission to his authority. You will not, you cannot, suffer such a device to succeed in enslaving you!"

"Hush! oh, hush!" said Dora, "do not let me hear these doubts. Ah! I could bear any agony save that worst of all—to doubt of your salvation. Say to me, promise me," she continued, almost wildly, "that you will not indulge this fearful rebellion. You know not how it has already made me tremble

for you. And it has been harder far for me to fear for your eternal safety than to relinquish the hope of ministering to your earthly happiness. But Father Adrien told me," she continued, with increasing wildness of manner, "that if I was the cause of your disobedience to the Church, I would but be a curse to you. Oh, then, tell me that my prayers are not in vain!—that you will seek rest in submission!"

"I will, I do, seek to obey the laws of God, Dora," said Sir Eustace, solemnly, "and to render to Him the service which is most acceptable, by fulfilling all the moral obligations which bind me to my fellow-men."

"But the commands of the Church," said Dora, anxiously. "It is the interpreter of God's will to us."

"And let us hear it when it speaks His will."

"Alas! it does so now," said Dora, sadly. "Were I to yield to your entreaties, I feel I should be endangering your own soul and mine. I have had a struggle, as you see, but now I am calm—calm as death. Is it kind, Sir Eustace, to rouse me from my lethargy, when you know that reviving feeling is but returning agony? You cannot wish me to yield when I know that by doing so I sin."

"Dora, did I believe that you committed an offence against the Divine law by returning my affection for you, which my conscience tells me is as pure and holy as it is profound and unchangeable, I would rather follow your bier than lead you to the altar. But it is not I who tempts you to sin—it is those who would sacrifice all true feeling to the punctilious exactions of a ceremonial law."

"Stop! Sir Eustace. My father in the Church—the only father I have ever known—warns me of the danger of the line of conduct you urge. You appeal to my heart, and tell me to trust to its dictates. Alas! I know it to be most treacherous. Shall I, a poor ignorant young girl, dare to oppose the promptings of my earthly passions, all confused as they rise from my feeble exhausted heart, to the repeated emphatic commands of

the Church, speaking by the voice of so venerable a guide as Father Adrien? Sir Eustace, in pity leave me; if you shake my trust in God's own Church, you will indeed complete my misery. That is my only hope—my only comfort; for pity's sake, do not take it away. Again I entreat of you to leave me—leave me, oh, could I say as you first found me! but that cannot be—leave me now, let me return to die, if it is God's will."

Sir Eustace felt it was in vain to plead. Silent, deadly pale, he wrung her hand, sprang on his horse, and, giving it the rein and the spur, was soon out of sight in his furious pace across the country. Dora saw him vanish; then, with steady step and fixed eye, she walked away, like one in a magnetic sleep, into the clear and cheerless autumn night.

CHAPTER XII.

——"Speak—
Did you by indirect and forced courses
Subdue and poison this young maid's affections?"
OTHELLO.

It was the night of a brilliant *fête* in the house of the Countess de L——; nearly all the English residing in Paris crowded to it. The rooms were splendidly lighted, strains of music filled the air, and all was revelry and enjoyment.

A little apart from the crowd sat two persons who appeared not to share in the general festivity. One was a young girl, evidently English; her pale features wore an expression of infantine innocence; her golden ringlets made her appear even *younger than she* was, but there was an air of thoughtfulness

and anxiety on her brow, and a look of sadness in her eyes, that seemed as if some heavy care had prematurely shaded her life. Beside her sat a man a little past his prime ; at first sight he appeared strikingly handsome, but, when observed more nearly, a sinister expression in the eye, and a lowering in the brow, counteracted the favorable impression. They were engaged in earnest conversation.

"How long will you thus linger, Cecilia?" said he ; "you are trifling with your eternal salvation."

"Were I assured of that," replied the girl, "I would delay no longer ; but can the faith of my mother be heresy?—the faith which has made her so holy and self-denying?—the faith which she taught me from the Word of God?"

"Hush!" replied her companion—"even these doubts are sin ; you have been convinced of the authority of the Apostolic Church—why do you listen to the arch-fiend who tempts you to your ruin?"

She turned suddenly round as he spoke, and fixing her bright eyes upon his face, said—

"What if the voice that tempts me to ruin be that which would lure me from my early faith, from my home, and from all who love me?"

A vivid paleness overspread his face for a moment, but he quickly added, in a tone of compassionate tenderness—

"I well know the agony of such doubts ; could the sacrifice of my life save you from the pangs you endure, most joyfully would I render it. I would gladly say, Cling to your faith—your home ; live as you have done, loving and beloved ; and, while I wander lonely and desolate, I could joy to think you were happy. But remember, *that* happiness will be but a meteor flash."

He was silent for a moment ; then, taking her hand, said in a tone of fixed resolve—

"I must, I will save you! you will be ready to-morrow morning?"

A slight shudder passed over her frame, but the victim was caught in the toils.

"I will," she said.

"Fear not," he whispered; "life, eternal life before you; and oh! Cecilia, we shall never be separated!"

At this moment Lady N—— approached.

"Will you allow me to introduce Lord Belmont to you, my dear Cecilia? He met Sir Eustace the other day in Rome."

The name of her brother recalled Cecilia. "When does my brother propose returning?" she inquired, after the first salutations were over.

"His plans seemed uncertain," replied Lord Belmont; "he intended to visit Greece, and will not, I think, return before the close of next summer."

Cecilia sighed, but, rousing herself, continued to converse with apparent animation. In a few minutes Lady S——'s carriage was announced, and the Conte di Romilli, as they descended the stairs, whispered, "I will meet you at day-break outside the gate."

Trembling and in silence she suffered him to place her in the carriage, and her cold hand returned not the pressure with which he relinquished it. She remained almost unconscious during her short drive home. Her mother had not retired to rest; her thoughts had been much and anxiously engaged. The destinies of her children had been pressing closely upon her heart, for, during his short stay at Paris, on his way to Italy, Sir Eustace had told his mother how matters stood between him and Dora. She looked pale and sad, and there was even more than usual tenderness in her reception of her daughter. Her mother's looks pierced Cecilia's heart, and she was on the point of revealing to that faithful guardian the snares in which she had been entangled, but an influence more powerful still restrained her. She could not, dared not, break the spell in which that dark spirit enchained her—she could not bear to hear her mother's voice; and, complaining of fatigue, escaped from

her presence. Solitude was a relief, but no sleep visited her that night; she passed the long hours in restless tossings, and, as the first streak of dawn marked the eastern horizon, she started as if awakening from a trance. She hastily dressed, and throwing around her a large cloak, descended the stairs. She paused a moment at her mother's door. "May Heaven bless thee," she softly murmured, "though I be cast away! But must I go?—it is not yet too late." A determination to free herself awoke in her mind—she placed her hand on the door, but ere she had opened it the momentary feeling was gone—a strange resistless spell urged her back, and she obeyed its impulse.

Cautiously opening a door at the foot of the stairs, she found herself in the open air. The moon had not yet given place to the advancing day-light, and shone clear in the heavens. She drew her cloak around her, for a chill frost crisped the ground beneath her feet, and, quickly crossing the court, opened a gate at its further extremity.

A carriage was awaiting her, and near it the Conte di Romilli. She shrunk back, but he took her hand, and, quickly placing her in the carriage, was by her side in an instant.

They drove rapidly through several streets, and at length stopped at a church in a retired part of the town.

The Count led Cecilia in by a side door, and she soon found herself in a long vaulted passage, dimly lighted by a lamp. A feeling of terror almost overpowered her—she felt she was entering upon unknown scenes, and it seemed as if the door which closed behind her, had shut her out from all that was known and familiar in the living world. She clung to the arm of her conductor for protection, and he soothed her with a gentleness which reassured her.

"Can you think," he whispered, "that I would expose to peril one a thousand times dearer than my own soul?"

They passed on, and entered a small chapel. It was empty, but candles were burning on the altar, only making the sur-

rounding darkness appear more gloomy. The Count led Cecilia to the steps, and placed her there, for she now trembled so violently, that she could scarcely stand.

"Why do you fear?" he said; "in one short hour you will be restored to your home. Meanwhile, can you not trust me? I have brought you here, that you may have the counsel of a venerable and holy man, who, by Heaven's aid, will remove the doubts that still perplex you; and, Cecilia, I have brought you for another purpose. In a few days I must leave you—you will then be alone in the midst of influences that would soon undermine your new-born faith. Years may pass ere we meet; and how little hope there is that one so young and gentle could remain steadfast, and win a combat in which she must fight unaided and alone!"

He paused—the thought of their separation, which for a while had been forgotten, banished from Cecilia's mind every fear—affection overmastered every other feeling. To be with him was life—apart from him, all was darkness and despair; and, unresistingly, she abandoned herself to the power that exercised over her an absolute sway.

"What are now your doubts?" at length inquired the Count.

"I know not," she replied, hesitatingly. "The Catholic Church—is its voice always one with the Holy Bible?"

"It must be so; the apostles of our Lord received directly from His lips their commission to teach and baptize all nations. In fulfilment of St. Paul's command, they delegated that office to faithful men who should succeed them, and gave us their credentials—the Book of the Law which they had written.

"Like the mantle of the ascending prophet, the spirit of the apostles fell upon their successors; and so it has been in all ages, even unto the present day. The ambassadors of God, in an unbroken stream, have continued to be the guardians and expounders of His law, preserving His flock in one fold, under the guidance of one shepherd—the Church; while those who would impiously assume to themselves the right of interpreting

Scripture have been broken and scattered like chaff before the wind, divided into sects, and convulsed by perpetual war with each other.

"Are your difficulties now gone?" he again asked, after a pause.

She was silent. He drew her towards him, and, signing her brow with the mark of the cross, threw over her neck a chain of gold, to which was attached a small crucifix of the same material.

"Blessed be the Mother of Heaven," he said, "who has extended to you her protecting arms! now, we are united for ever, Cecilia. But an earthly as well as heavenly tie must bind us. Lady Fitzgerald has forbidden our union; but those whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder. Three years must pass ere you can act independently: we must then put it beyond the power of circumstances to separate us. Do not hesitate, beloved one," he continued, as he saw her tremble and turn pale; "I would not urge you thus, were only my own happiness concerned, but I must have a right to protect your new-born faith."

"I cannot!" she murmured. "Oh! do not, do not urge this without my mother's blessing!"

"You have the blessing of Heaven," he answered, earnestly; "do not hesitate nor delay; the time is flying, and our absence will be discovered. It must, it shall be so. I swear by the blessed saints, that you shall not leave this spot until you are mine—I will not go hence till I possess the right to snatch you at any moment from perdition."

The spell was again around her, which fascinated while it terrified. She covered her face with her hands—an agonizing conflict shook her soul. It was of brief duration. She raised her head, and placing her hand in his, exclaimed—

"Take me, then, for life or death, and if I err, my guilt be on your head!"

"Gladly will I bear it, pure being!" he exclaimed; and sounding a call, a door opened behind the altar, and a venerable man

in the garb of a priest issued forth; two others attended him, and the ceremony began. A mist floated over Cecilia's eyes, the voice of the priest rang in her ears, and she was only recalled to consciousness by feeling the bridal ring placed on her finger, and the voice of the Count, in the tones of tenderest devotion, address her as his wife. Immediately after the service, she received with her husband the eucharist, and thus sealed her admission into the Catholic Church. The contract was signed—the priest retired; the Count conducted her again through the dark passage. In a few moments she was by his side, rapidly driving towards the chateau.

When she alighted at the gate, the sun was shining brightly over the smiling earth, now clothed in the first tints of spring. The air was filled with the joyous songs of birds, and all around looked fair and calm—but within, fear and trouble were darkly brooding.

"Farewell," said the Count; "we shall meet to-morrow. Nay, be strong," he continued, as she looked at him with almost a vacant gaze—"Cecilia, arouse yourself; remember how much depends on your self-command."

In her quick obedience there was perhaps as much of fear as love.

"Yes, I will be calm," she said, while a faint smile played on her pale features. "I will be strong; but oh! how shall I meet my mother!"

"These are vain and foolish thoughts," said he, abruptly; "meet her with the conscious rectitude of one who has sacrificed all to obey the voice of Heaven; we know not but you may yet be made the means of leading her to a purer faith."

He pressed her hand to his lips, and, entering the carriage, drove away. In a few minutes the last sound of his retreating wheels died in the distance, and Cecilia was alone;—alone she indeed felt, for all the ties of home and childhood seemed as if severed by her own hand.

It was still early morning, and instead of entering the house,

she walked to a little grove in the garden, and sat down under the shade of the trees. The dew lay thickly on the grass, and sparkled in the sunbeams. As her eye rested on it, she seemed carried back to her own Ireland. The darkness of the past few months rolled away like a cloud, and she was again a happy child in the woods of Ballyrowan; again she felt the boundings of the free heart that would never more be hers; again life seemed to her one long summer day of sunshine. Her mother's care, her brother's love, were around her once more; —but she started and awoke from her dream, for a black gulf yawned between her and that paradise, and it was hers no longer! Her eye fell upon her marriage ring, and, shuddering, she recoiled. She belonged to another—an alien from her father's house held in his hand her destiny, and had power, when he would, to tear her from her home.

She arose; for the agony in her soul was too strong to suffer her to rest. She hastened to the house—suddenly she remembered the ring—it must not be seen upon her finger. Ah! never before had she known what it was to dread her mother's eye! She withdrew the symbol of her new relationship, and, fastening it to the gold chain, hid it with the crucifix in her bosom. She retired to her room, and took the seat in the window which she had occupied the night before. She remembered the wild conflict that had wrung her bosom. Then she had parted from him in doubt and fear, and now she was his for ever.

Quick as thought the whole tide of feeling turned. The thought that she was bound to him by indissoluble ties filled her heart with joy. Life and happiness were with him. In the midst of this trance she was summoned to the breakfast-room. She resolutely threw back the emotion that was awakened by the tender greeting of her mother, and conversed as calmly upon indifferent subjects as if her heart had been at ease. In the afternoon the Count came to bid adieu—he was to return to Italy next morning. Cecilia became pale when he entered—to

meet him, her husband, in her mother's presence, was almost too much. Lady Fitzgerald observed her emotion, but, attributing it to a different cause, forbore to notice it, and left her at liberty by at once entering into conversation with the Count.

His visit was short. "Farewell, Lady Fitzgerald," he said, as he rose to depart. "We may not meet again, but I shall ever cherish the remembrance of the days in which I have enjoyed your society. While I live, I shall pray that the blessing of Heaven may be yours."

"Farewell," returned Lady Fitzgerald, with emotion. "If not here, God grant that we may meet in that abode where darkness and error have fled for ever, before the light of truth. That it may guide our path, shall be my daily prayer."

He turned to Cecilia—"Farewell, Miss Fitzgerald," he said

She remained silent, and the next moment he was gone. But she was to see him again—she had promised to meet him in the evening.

During the day, her mother's gentle tenderness was a continual reproach to her heart. Lady Fitzgerald saw the distress she vainly strove to conceal, but attributing it to her separation from one she had loved, she was not surprised, and strove by every means to lead her thoughts from the subject.

At the appointed hour, Cecilia was leaving the house, when she met Lady Fitzgerald in the hall.

"Are you going out, my child?" said she.

"Yes, mama," replied Cecilia. She would have said more, but she was unused to deceit—she changed color, and her voice faltered.

Lady Fitzgerald saw her confusion, but, wholly unsuspicious of the cause, she kissed her, saying—"It is a lovely night, and I wish I could accompany you."

Cecilia suddenly threw her arms around her mother's neck, pressed her almost convulsively to her heart, and hastened to the carriage.

She passed quickly through several streets, and was soon at the door of the church where she had been in the morning, and found the Count awaiting her. Again every feeling was absorbed in the ecstasy of his presence.

"Farewell, beloved!" said the Count, when they were about to part; "be faithful, be steadfast, and soon I shall return to claim you, never to part again!"

"She rested for a moment in the consciousness of that presence she was so soon to lose, which now seemed her all on earth; then, tearing herself from his arms, she hastened home.

He gazed after her receding form; then exclaiming "*Io l'ho fatto!*" he left the church.

Cecilia found Lady Fitzgerald waiting rather anxiously for her return.

There was a large wood fire blazing upon the hearth. She threw on fresh logs, and when the full light fell upon Cecilia's face, her mother started.

"My darling, what is the matter? You look ill."

Cecilia tried to answer, but in vain; the half-uttered words died upon her lips, and she fell back fainting in her chair. Lady Fitzgerald called no assistant; she merely placed her child in an easy position, and, bathing her temples, waited till she revived.

"Where am I?" exclaimed Cecilia, opening her eyes, and looking wildly around. "Oh! do not urge me! But no, no, I am yours for ever!"

"Cecilia, my darling," said Lady Fitzgerald, gently taking her hand—"you are safe, you are with your mother. Do you not know me, my child?"

She looked up, then, shuddering, hid her face in her hands. Lady Fitzgerald remained for some time without speaking, her daughter's hand clasped in her own, while she fervently implored for her the mercy of Heaven.

For a few moments, a burst of sobs shook Cecilia's frame, but they subsided; and raising herself, she threw her arms around

her mother's neck, and pressed her cold lips upon her forehead. "Forgive me, my mother," she said, "I am better now; but I should like to go to rest."

Lady Fitzgerald accompanied her to her room. "My child," she said, drawing her to her bosom, "do not think that I am insensible to your sufferings; it wrings my heart to pain you, but had I acted otherwise, I should have been a most unfaithful guardian of your peace. Your presence is the very blessing of my life, and yet I could have committed you to the care of one in whose hands your eternal interests would have been safe; but could I throw you into the very bosom of an apostate Church, and commit you to the care of one whose influence would have been exercised to convert you to its faith?"

Lady Fitzgerald waited for a reply, but Cecilia spoke not; cold and silent, she continued to lean on her mother's bosom, as if life had well-nigh forsaken her.

"In a few years," continued Lady Fitzgerald, "you will be of age; I may then advise, but I cannot control you. While you are under my guardianship, I must take the responsibility of your actions, and prevent your following any course which I believe would lead to ruin; but when you are free, if you choose to unite yourself to the Count, I cannot prevent." She kissed Cecilia, and left the room.

"And can I deceive thee, best and kindest of mothers!" said Cecilia, as she listened to the sound of Lady Fitzgerald's retreating footsteps. "Ah, how little you dream that the child you cherish has already forsaken your faith, and cast off the authority which has never been exercised but to bless!"

She threw herself on her knees, but she could not pray. Days of peace were fled. She remained long buried in deep reverie; new, strange, and conflicting were her emotions, and a wild delight mingled with her agony. Oh! could his sheltering presence have been near her—could she have followed to the world's end one in whom her very being seemed absorbed!

* * * * *

Cecilia's rapidly failing health soon alarmed Lady Fitzgerald. She gave up the idea of going to London for the season, and hastened her return to Ballyrowan, in the hope that her native air and scenes of former happiness might restore the peace which was so sadly blighted.

CHAPTER XIII.

"It was no ling'ring slow decay,
When hope, still fainting, still revives.
. . . . . .
Another, and another day
Behold her living—yet Despair
Came at the first, and settled there!
As in a night, without a ray,
The frail and shatter'd bark is driven;
No port on earth—no beam from heaven."

DALE.

ONCE more Dora was alone, and gazing from her window over the quiet lawn sleeping in the moonbeams that just silvered the tops of the woods through which she had passed. A change had come over the spirit of the scene, and all nature bore for her a different aspect from what it had done a few hours before. The alternate light and shade—the hope and fear which, despite herself, had chequered her path—were gone, and the calmness of fixed resolve had settled over her. Her decision was made—her purpose matured.

The conflict was over; henceforth life wore for her no April garb, but a path of self-devotion opened before her; one star of consolation alone glimmered in the horizon—the thought that

by constant intercession for him she might still be the guardian angel of his life.

She spent the evening in her room, and, unable to sleep or rest, waited until all in the Castle was still, and then, softly descending the stairs, proceeded to the chapel.

She knelt before the altar; there, in the silence of night, she solemnly consecrated herself to the service of Him upon whose pictured form she gazed. 'Tis true, no answer had yet been given to the question that stirred the depths of her soul—truth was still to her a mystery, and the Word of God a sealed book—yet there was a dim perception that in Him was life; and as she thus knelt in the quiet chapel, and felt, for the first time, that she might, and *must* approach Him without the aid of earthly intercessors, a tone of ineffable consolation dawned upon her spirit. Gradually her feelings arose almost to ecstasy. She knew not that it was fever burning in her veins that changed her joy from the saddened character it would otherwise have borne, but the throbbing in her temples increased till it became intolerable; her thoughts grew confused—strange lights danced around her, and rushing sounds assailed her ears. A half-stifled cry for help burst from her lips—she stretched out her arms to the picture, which seemed to smile and bend towards her, and fell senseless on the floor. Here she was found by the priest, who had heard her cry in the delirium of fever. The long-strained chords had been too harshly struck, and for many days Dora trembled on the verge of life. She knew not how long a time had passed when she awoke as from sleep. A sense of intolerable thirst tormented her. She raised herself to look for Harris. She was alone, and lay quiet without ringing the bell, lest it should recall the guard, whose absence was a relief. Presently she heard the sound of footsteps in the ante-room—the door was cautiously opened, and nurse entered.

"Blessins on ye, avourneen! have I seen your face at last? Oh, I've been watchin' this long and weary time, an' I thought *I was* niver to hear your voice agin!"

"Why did you not come to me?" inquired Dora, faintly.

"Becase his rivirence would not hear iv it, by no manner of manes, dear; he would let none but that English woman near you, becase she was skilled, he said, in the faver: but could she 'tend ye as I would have done, acushla?—shure I carried ye in my bosom, and nursed ye as if ye were my own flesh and blood."

"And how did you get here to-night?" asked Dora.

"By the help of the Blessed Vargin. I said twenty paters and twenty aves for ye, ever since ye took the throuble, and I said them all on my bare knees on the chapel flure. I passed the nights there, darlint, an' the days mostly about the stairs an' passages, waitin' for a chance to get Mrs. Harris out iv yer room, for I knew well it was not yerself that was kaping me from yees; an' so this afthernoon I was weary wid watchin', an' the slape had come over me, as I sat on the steps at the end iv the great hall, an' some one touched me shouldher; I looked up, an' there's Kathleen. 'Mrs. O'Sullivan,' she says, 'it's the vigil of the crucifixion, as ye know, to-night, and Mrs. Harris will be in the chapel. Come about two in the morning, and I'll take you up to Miss Mowbray's room, for I'm to be beside her.' So wid that she left me, for we heard a fut, and were afeard that any one 'ud take notice of us."

"Were you not afraid to disobey Father Adrien?" inquired Dora; "and besides, you know you must confess, and he will be displeased."

"I'll jist forgit it, dear, afore I go to my duty; an' shure, whin ye're bether, I can go to Lough Derg, an' that will take away the sin, iv it be a sin; but I'll never believe that the good God above us can be angry wid me for tending the child of my heart; shure did he not put the love widin, whin ye wer a helpless baby, an' her that's now a saint in heaven gev ye to my care?—'Nurse,' says she, 'if my child is left an orphan, you'll never forsake her;' and while the pulse is in my heart, dear, it will bate for ye. Much need have I to care for ye, for their black sowls is round about ye; an' now, acushla machree,

listen, for we'll soon be disturbed, and I've much to say to ye Kathleen's watchin' at the stair-head, an' she'll give us word if any one comes near. Ye're in bad hands, darlint, but the Almighty is above all. I came to the chapel to-night about twelve o'clock, an' thought I'd pass the time at my prayers, till the hour I was to see you ; so I wint behind one of the great pillars, where neider his rivirence or she could get a sight of me if so be they came in ; an' there I was tellin' my beads, when I heard steps, an' presently the very two came up, and they stood whisperin' jist forninst the altar. I'd have gone out, but they stood so that I could not pass, an' well it was I couldn't. 'How is she to-night ?' said his rivirence—they did not name ye, dear, but I soon know'd who they were spakin' iv. 'She is better, getting fast better.' 'Well, perhaps it is best,' said the praste ; 'and yet, had she died, the inheritance would have come to the Church at once. Unless something is soon done, both are lost—even now she is on the highway to heresy ; and if her faith in the Church is gone, no authority can be maintained over a spirit so indomitable.' They were quiet for a few minutes, an' then Mrs. Harris spoke ; her voice was low, but I could hear every word ; an' in thruth, acushla, I thought the blood was froze in my head, when I heard that spirit of darkness in woman's shape spake the words that came off her tongue ; my malison on her, now an' evermore, Amin ! 'There are ways, Father,' she said, 'of silencing those whose life is injurious to the interests of the Church ; she might still die of the fever, and none would ask the cause of the relapse.' 'It is true, it is true,' he said in a flusther ; the Holy Mother sometimes demands a sacrifice of our best affections ; but not this—at least not now ; there are other means.' 'What, then, would you do ?' asked Mrs. Harris. 'She has resisted hitherto,' said the Father, with a laugh ; 'but do you think that a helpless girl can long hold out against means which have subdued the strongest hearts of men ? If she should, a foreign *convent is always* open ; she can die to the world there ; and

this must be, or her Protestant relations will claim her.' 'They will claim her now, if you don't take care,' said Harris. 'Had you listened to her ravings, as I have done, you would know that she is much nearer heresy than you suppose; and now Lady Fitzgerald has returned, no power, at least none that you seem inclined to use, will long keep her within your grasp.' 'Woman,' said his rivirence, 'you are a fiend incarnate.' 'And who made me so?' she answered, with a laugh that sounded like what he called her; 'however, as you are so tender-hearted, let the girl live—I wish you had begun sooner.' They whispered for a little, but as they left the chapel, I heard the praste say, 'Remember, then, Miss Mowbray has been the worse for seeing Miss Fitzgerald; she must see no one else for some time to come.' I left by the back way, and had the luck to mate Kathleen; but now, darlint, I will tell ye what to do—jist give me a line in yer own hand to her ladyship—I'll carry it to her this blessed minit, with the first break of day—she'll come and take ye away, for, darlint, id's safe ye are not, and sure ye must stay here no longer."

"I will," said Dora, quickly; "it cannot be wrong. He can be no faithful interpreter of God's will to me, whose counsels are so dark."

The nurse handed her materials for writing, and she had just begun when Kathleen entered in breathless haste, saying that Harris was coming. Nurse clasped her darling's hand for a moment—"Iv life an' breath are in me, I'll go to her ladyship, an' tell her by word of mouth"—and left the room.

Harris entered, and took her place. Fain would the unhappy girl have had a little quiet to reflect upon the fearful prospects which had just opened before her, and the course she ought to pursue; but she was never left alone—night and day Harris maintained her guard.

At an earlier hour than she had done since her illness, Dora rose. When her toilet was completed, she asked for some refreshment. Harris looked earnestly at her when she brought

it, and through the habitual guard which she kept upon her features, Dora perceived an expression which she vainly tried to read—it might be surprise that she was so well. She had little doubt that Lady Fitzgerald would come to rescue her that very day, and if so, she determined at once to assert her independence, and accompany her. Not for months had she felt so well, so tranquil; for the strength of resolve, and energy prepared for action, were in her soul; and the hope of deliverance had risen on her dreary path. But that day passed, and, as she watched the waning light that obliged her to give up hope of succor, on that day at least, her heart sunk within her. Nurse's mission might have been delayed; Lady Fitzgerald would certainly come on the morrow. But the morrow came and passed without succor; and another day and another, till three long dreary weeks had passed over, and still there was no help. She was kept a prisoner to her room long after she felt that the sweet air of spring would have revived her strength. She never took a cup from the hand of Harris, without thinking it might contain the poisoned draught. She never listened to the sound of carriage-wheels, without imagining that it might be the carriage destined to convey her to a living grave in a foreign land. The strength that had been slowly returning again, gave way; and those who had seen the blooming girl, full of health and hope, who arrived at Carlington two years before, would hardly have known her now. Yet, when the priest looked on her pale brow, and met the gaze of her calm unshrinking eye, he knew that her spirit was unsubdued, and his power weaker than ever.

"Has Lady Fitzgerald never been to see me, since she arrived?" she inquired one day, when Miss Beauford was sitting with her.

"O yes; she has been here," said Miss Beauford, "several times. But your uncle thought it better for you not to see any one—you are yet too weak."

A few days after this, Harris brought a message from Mr

Mowbray, to say that Lady Fitzgerald waited below, and, if Miss Mowbray felt able, would come to see her.

"O yes; bring her quickly," said Dora.

Harris left the room.

"Now, now!" exclaimed Dora, "the time of my deliverance is come!" She heard Lady Fitzgerald's footsteps upon the threshold—she flew to meet her, and in another moment was folded to her bosom; but as she raised her head she encountered the dark eye of Mr. Mowbray, who remained in the room during the whole of Lady Fitzgerald's visit. She could not trace in her aunt's countenance any sign that she knew her circumstances, or was prepared to act for her. She felt as if deliverance was hopeless, should she once suffer her to depart alone.

"Have you received any message from me?" she inquired, at length.

"I received the message you sent by Cecilia, my love," answered Lady Fitzgerald; "you know I have been longing to see you, but Mr. Mowbray thought it more prudent that you should remain perfectly quiet."

"I am better—indeed, nearly well now," replied Dora; "I am sure change of air would do me good. Could you take me back with you to-day to Ballyrowan?"

"Most thankfully, my child, if it can be without danger. Mr. Mowbray, what do you think?"

"I fear Dora is not well enough for the journey, short though it be," answered the priest; "yet I would not willingly disappoint her; we will send for Mr. O'Brien, and be guided by his opinion."

Mr. O'Brien had resided chiefly at Carlington since the commencement of Dora's illness; he was a physician of high reputation, especially amongst the Catholic families in the neighborhood, as he was believed to excel no less in sanctity than in talent. Dora had not seen him until she was taken ill, nor indeed been conscious of his presence even then; but, during the period of her convalescence, he had been in constant attend-

ance, and she had vainly struggled against the feelings of repugnance which his sinister countenance and cold sarcastic manner inspired. He now gave it as his opinion, that Miss Mowbray was not yet sufficiently recovered to venture upon more than a short drive, and that even that had better be delayed for a few days. She vainly sought for an opportunity of a moment's private intercourse with Lady Fitzgerald—Mr. Mowbray did not leave them for an instant, and, with an earnest hope that she might soon be able to come to Ballyrowan, and a promise, meanwhile, of very often visiting her, Lady Fitzgerald withdrew.

Her heart sank as she saw the carriage drive away. A future of bleak despair stretched before her, terminated, perhaps, suddenly and soon, by a violent death. She wished that she had spoken, even in the presence of the priest, and at once cast herself upon the protection of her friends; but the spell of his influence was not yet so broken, that she could utterly defy his authority—and now the opportunity was gone.

In the evening she received a visit from Mr. Mowbray; he urged her to confession, to which, he said, she had shown a disinclination.

"For some time, my daughter," he said, in his blandest accents, "I have seen with grief that you no longer find the pleasure you once did in your religious exercises; the Holy Church is not now the mother on whose bosom you love to rest. If you have any doubts regarding that divine guide, confide them to me."

"I do not doubt the authority of the Church, Father," replied Dora, firmly, "but there may be false shepherds even in the true fold."

She had uttered the words without premeditation, for her soul burned when she listened to the insinuating tones of him who had wrought her such ill. But she was immediately sensible of their imprudence when she saw the fire flash from his eyes.

"*Presumptuous* girl!" he exclaimed, in accents of smothered

anger ; "you shall repent your obstinacy and infidelity! There are means, remember, even of subduing the hardest hearts.—My poor child," he continued, changing his tone, after a short pause, "whilst a holy anger fills my soul at beholding you thus seduced by the Evil One, my heart bleeds for the punishment which must come upon you. Think of the fearful pains of purgatory which you brave ! Remember the venerable mother who now intercedes for you in heaven, that your obduracy and impenitence may be melted. Must the dead again arise ?—by the spirit of the departed only will you listen to the voice of the Church ?"

Tears, the first that she had shed for many months, were forced from her eyes when he spoke of her departed friend. She remembered her gentle instructions, and felt as if, in her independent search for truth, she had been severing herself from one who had died a faithful member of the Catholic Church. Her strength was wasted by illness and solitary confinement, and the sudden crushing of her hopes had broken the energy which had borne her up so bravely. Confession was made ; the struggles of the free spirit to find the light of truth were mourned as sin ; absolution was pronounced ; penance enjoined ; and Dora left alone, with her crushed heart and throbbing head. Her thoughts were a mass of wild confusion. Was she indeed rebelling against the Church ? and was the Father right in urging that herself and all her possessions should be consecrated to its peculiar service ?

Had her nurse's fears for her magnified the danger ? She might even have misunderstood their words. Uncertain and perplexed, she long and weariedly tried to unravel the web of her dark and uncertain lot. At last she determined to ask delay ere any decided step was taken, but in other things to submit unresistingly to the will of the priest.

"Though life, and happiness, and all, be sacrificed," she thought, "what matters it, if the soul be saved at last ? Yet, Eustace, *must your life too* be blighted with mine ?"

CHAPTER XIV.

——"Meddle not with her.
For shame, thou hilding of a devilish spirit!
Why dost thou wrong her that did ne'er wrong thee?"

SHAKSPEARE.

——"'Tis a base
Abandonment of reason, to resign
Our right of thought."

CHILDE HAROLD.

For a few weeks all went on quietly. From some motive which she could not understand, Father Adrien appeared to have changed his design, and no longer attempted to make Dora a prisoner, but, on the contrary, rather encouraged her to mix more freely with society, which the return of the neighboring families to the country permitted her to do. His whole manner also was changed; he employed all the powers of fascination which he knew so well how to exercise, and, by kindness and indulgence, seemed anxious to make her forget the sufferings of the past few months.

One thing, however, she observed—that he seldom left her alone; he was constantly by her side, and she had an intuitive consciousness that he heard or saw all she did and felt. Thankful, however, to have an interval of repose, and that all discussion regarding her becoming a nun was for the present laid aside, she resigned herself unresistingly to this constant *surveillance*, without any other relief than the solitary rambles in *which she was now* again able to indulge, and with which Mr.

Mowbray did not interfere. Upon one of the first days she was able to go out, he drove her to Ballyrowan—her heart had yearned for this visit more painfully than she had ever yet done. She felt the restraint of her uncle's presence, which did not allow her to enjoy one moment of unrestrained intercourse with Lady Fitzgerald or Cecilia.

He resisted all Lady Fitzgerald's solicitations for Dora to remain a few days, although urged to stay with her himself. "At least you will promise to return soon, my dear child?" said Lady Fitzgerald, when Dora rose to go.

"I hope so; I shall try," she said, with a half timid glance, that, as it involuntarily turned to Mr. Mowbray, told how strong was the chain that bound her. Lady Fitzgerald sighed as she felt the impossibility of obtaining access to one whom she regarded with almost maternal tenderness.

"Though you are yet unable to go out much, Dora," said Mr. Mowbray, "perhaps Lady Fitzgerald will spend an early day with you."

"How much I should wish it!" replied Dora. "You will come to us soon, will you not?"

Lady Fitzgerald promised to do so.

"Is Lord Belmont still with you?" said Mr. Mowbray.

"He is, and will remain, I hope, some time. Here he is," she continued, as at that moment she saw him ride up the avenue.

Mr. Mowbray expressed a wish to renew his acquaintance, as he had formerly known him in Italy.

While he was engaged, Lady Fitzgerald found an opportunity to put a letter into Dora's hand. She immediately concealed it, and was the next moment summoned by the priest.

"Lord Belmont has promised to accompany Lady Fitzgerald to Carlington," said Mr. Mowbray, as they entered the carriage; "I think you will enjoy his society—he is very agreeable."

"I like his countenance," said Dora; "it is amiable, but does not bespeak much talent."

"No, he is perhaps not remarkable for talent, but he is highly cultivated."

"Who is he?" inquired Dora; "for I do not remember to have heard you speak of him."

"He is of an old English family; and lately, in right of his mother, has succeeded to an Irish estate—Dungarvon—not very far from this. He is now come to take possession."

Dora did not ask any further questions, and the subject passed from her mind. As soon as they arrived at Carlington, she hastened to her room, impatient to read the letter she had received from Lady Fitzgerald. Harris was there, but she quickly dismissed her; and, locking the door, sat down to enjoy for once the luxury of free communication with her friend.

It was a letter full of the tenderest sympathy and affection. She found that Lady Fitzgerald was aware of the mutual attachment of Sir Eustace and herself. "I would not urge you, my child," she wrote, "to act contrary to the dictates of conscience, but I would implore you to seek that conscience may be enlightened. But while I do entreat that you will not thus causelessly cast from you your own happiness and that of another, I would urge you even more earnestly to seek in all things to know the truth of God, that your eternal salvation may be secured. You are surrounded by difficulties; and all that can enchain the mind, and fetter the conscience, is in your case opposed to your search. But remember that the God of truth is the Father of spirits, and no man has either the right or power to bar your free access to Him. Alone, then, my beloved Dora, and unaided save by the Divine Spirit, draw near to Him, and He will raise you above the mists and darkness that now surround you, into the pure region of eternal light."

When Dora had read the letter, she sat long in deep meditation.

"The light of truth," she murmured; "would that I could find it! but if Father Adrien is right—if all lights but that of

the Church lead astray, I dare not follow them. Holy Mother! save me from heresy!"

She resolutely stifled the strivings of her spirit, believing that she was thus turning from error, and, kneeling before a crucifix, repeated the formulas of the Church, until she was summoned to dinner.

Early in the evening she escaped from the house, and almost mechanically took the way to nurse's cottage—she had not walked so far since her illness. When she had expressed a wish to see nurse, Father Adrien had informed her that she had gone a pilgrimage to Lough Derg. She was now anxious to know if she had returned, and whether she had given her message to Lady Fitzgerald; for the absence of all allusion to it in the letter just received was inexplicable.

When she reached the cottage, she found nurse's daughter at home, but learned that the old woman had not yet returned.

"Indeed, me lady, I begin to think long for her," said her daughter. "It's three weeks this blissed night sin' she set out."

"Three weeks!" said Dora; "are you sure it is so long?"

"Troth, and I am, then, me lady; by the same token it was on the eve of the blessed crucifixion, and she went up to kape a vigil at the chapel, an' 'Mother,' says I, 'will it be late afore ye're home?' So says she, 'Don't be waiting for me, girl, nor suffer the boy to wait, for it will be mornin' afore I'm afther laving the chapel; shure I'll kape this night's vigil for me child,' —that's yerself, ma'am asthore—'that she may be spared to reign over us.' So in the mornin' I was standin' at the door, an' lookin' out for her, an' I sees a colleen runnin' down the hill. 'Aileen Sullivan, says she, 'his rivirence sint me down to ye to tell ye that Mrs. Sullivan's away to the station, for he laid it on her to go this blissed mornin', an' she sint ye her blessin', an' ye'll not be wearyin' afther her, but be helpin' her wid your prayers.' So from that hour to this, me lady, I heard no word of her; an' shure, had she been well, it's at home she'd have been afore now; an' three days ago, Lanty set out to get

some word of her, and I'm lookin' for him back to night ;—and there is himself, me lady, this blissed minute," she added, as, from the open door where she was standing, she caught the first glimpse of her husband's figure coming over the brow of the hill.

He pulled off his hat as he approached.

"God save you kindly, ma'am ! I hope I see your ladyship in better health ; long life to ye, ma'am !" but his voice was so sad, and his looks so downcast, that Dora at once forboded evil tidings.

"Have you heard anything of nurse, Lanty ?" she inquired hastily.

"Sorra a word, me lady ; I met plenty of thim that's been at the station, but never a sight of her they'd had ; an' shure the fear's strong at my heart that we'll not be hearin' any good news of her at all, at all ; but Him that's above is merciful, and I've vowed a candle to the shrine of the Blessed Vargin, if she'll bring her to us in safety."

He drew the sleeve of his coat, as he spoke, across his eyes. His wife was weeping bitterly, but the grief of neither equalled the despair of Dora.

"Is there any place of danger on the road, where harm could have befallen her ?" she inquired.

"Vinasthru ! me lady, there is ; sure there's danger enough among the Kerry mountains ; she might lose herself, and fall among the rocks, an' it's long she might be lyin' there, an' none but the wild birds in the air get knowledge on it. But don't be cast down, lady dear, an' don't take on so, Aileen, we'll maybe see her again, safe and sound, afore many days are gone; anyhow, kape up the good heart."

"The country shall be searched immediately," said Dora ; "God grant we may be successful ; rest to-night, Lanty, and come up to the Castle early in the morning. Meanwhile I will consult Father Adrien as to what is best to be done ;" and with an aching heart she hastened home. She felt as if newly bereft of a parent. "Alas ! alas !" she exclaimed, in bitterness

of spirit—"am I born to be a curse to all who care for me?—to love me is to be blighted—to lose happiness or life. Better far would it be to give up this strife, and retire to a sanctuary, where at least my misery could not extend to others; but I have promised him that so it should not be!"

As these thoughts passed in her mind, she emerged from the shade of the wood into the open space in front of the Castle. Some one was approaching, whom she soon recognised as Harris.

"Miss Beauford desired me to look for you, ma'am; she was afraid of your catching cold."

Dora was annoyed; but, anxious to please her aunt, she hastened on.

"How can you be so foolish as to expose yourself in this manner?" said the old lady, meeting her upon the hall steps; "do you not see that the dew has been falling for the last hour?"

"It has not hurt me, aunt; but where is Father Adrien? I must see him immediately. Nurse has never returned from Lough Derg, and there is not an hour to be lost in searching for her."

"I have no doubt that nurse is perfectly safe, and I really wish you would attend to your own health, instead of running after all the old women in the country. Mr. Mowbray is not at home, and I must beg you to go to your room, and change your dress, and I will send you a posset to throw off the effects of the night air."

"I do not require anything, thank you. When will my uncle return?"

"I wish you would pay a little attention to the advice of those who know better than yourself, Miss Mowbray. Mr. Mowbray was uncertain whether he should return to-night; you can see him in the morning—that will be time enough."

"No, it will not, indeed; we must send out people to search this very night—who knows what danger she may be in?"

"I have no doubt she has only stopped on the way to visit some old crone like herself," said Miss Beauford; "but if anything should have befallen her, you may consider it a judgment upon yourself, for the overweening fuss you always made about her."

Dora's cheek flushed, but she did not reply; the thought of nurse's devotion, and the remembrance that she might never more be able to promote her happiness, awoke a sharp pang in her heart. Miss Beauford often touched a chord which vibrated sorely, but such petty injuries were not of a nature to awaken her indignation.

Their conference was cut short by the entrance of Mr. Mowbray, who had altered his intention of remaining absent.

"I have just met Lanty," he said, before Dora had time to address him; "he has told me of poor nurse's disappearance, and I have given orders for two or three stout men to go out in search of her, and to inquire at every cabin they pass, whether any one answering her description has lately travelled that way; I trust we shall soon receive satisfactory tidings."

"Oh thank you, my dear uncle! I was just going to entreat you to do quickly what you have already done. Heaven grant that she may soon be found! And now, aunt," she said, smiling sweetly as she turned to Miss Beauford, "I am ready to use all the precautions you wish."

"When they are probably too late to be of any use," answered the old lady; "however, you had better go to bed at once now."

From this time began a series of annoyances, which, petty as they were, when added to the heavier weights that were pressing upon Dora's heart, sadly invaded the degree of tranquillity she might otherwise have enjoyed.

If she went out in the early morning, Harris was sent to entreat her to remain within doors till the dew was off the ground. When she rose from the dinner-table, Miss Beauford *seized the opportunity*, before she could escape, to implore her

to return before sunset. If she walked, there was danger of her fatiguing herself; if she rode, the horse might run off, and cause a return of her illness. Such had not been the custom in Miss Beauford's day. She had been taught to drive in the middle of the day, and remain at her tambour-frame all the evening. If ladies had ridden and walked then, as they did now—had read books and learned languages that were thought fit only for students at college—she wondered how their households would have gone on, or where all the good tapestry would have come from that furnished their rooms.

With household matters, indeed, Dora had little to occupy her, even had she been so disposed. From the time of her illness, the charge of all within doors had been as completely assumed by her aunt as all without had long been by her uncle. She was a mere cipher both on her own property and in her own house. By the servants she was devotedly loved; and, had they dared, they would have rebelled against the foreign yoke thus imposed upon them; but the slightest shadow of what was called disrespect to Miss Beauford was so severely censured by the priest, that all they could do was to show their devotion to Dora by every private attention they could find opportunity of rendering her.

Dora was not, however, inclined to sink into such a position without making an effort to free herself.

"I am perfectly able now," she said one day to Miss Beauford, "to resume my usual duties. I will not trouble you any longer."

"I would gladly resign them, Miss Mowbray," replied Miss Beauford; "but I must perform, however thanklessly received, the duty imposed upon me by one whom we are both bound to obey. You cannot be ignorant of the reason you have given your uncle to fear that heretical notions have found too ready an access to your mind, and he wishes as much as possible to prevent such intercourse with the members of the household as might spread the taint. The holy saints grant," she continued,

devoutly crossing herself, "that you may soon be brought to a better mind!"

Dora was silent. This piece of intelligence, which the priest had not intended to be communicated at such a time, or in such a way, deeply distressed her.

"If such be the wish of my uncle," she said with a slight haughtiness of manner, "it must, of course, be obeyed." She left the room

"Is it so, indeed?" she said to herself, when she reached her own room. "Am I then little better than a prisoner in my own house? Alas, worse! for prison walls cannot control the free spirit, but mine is chained." She suddenly checked herself. "This is heresy! Is my uncle, then, right, and the course he is adopting the only one for my eternal good?"

That night the priest desired her to meet him at confession. She took the opportunity of repeating what Miss Beauford had said.

"Is the spirit's search for truth really heresy, Father? Has God given authority to one portion of our race thus to bind their fellows?"

"Had man continued in a perfect state of being," replied the priest, "such restraint would have been unnecessary; but from the days of our first parents, the tree of knowledge has communicated evil as well as good; and, to guard as much as may be, the unlearned, the young, and the weak, from such fatal food, the Father of heaven has wisely committed all sacred mysteries to the keeping of His Church, that her priests may try all things, and prepare and administer to His flock their food in due season, and such as is convenient for them. The peril, my daughter, in which you stand," he continued, observing that Dora listened with fixed attention, "arises from that spirit of free inquiry, which would lead you to an utter disregard of the old landmarks, and launch you on a boundless sea of error. In such a state of mind, I would have you devote *much time to* meditation and prayer, and seclude yourself as

much as may be from intercourse with those over whom your influence involves responsibility."

He paused. Dora bent her head on the railing of the altar, before which she was kneeling—an awful sense of guilt weighed down her spirit. She must indeed have deeply sinned in setting at naught the counsel of the Church. It was true, the tree of knowledge had looked bright and fair, and her soul had sprung forward as if its fruit were her native food ; but so, no doubt, had it been, when the tempter's light shed its false radiance over the untrodden heights toward which our first parents pressed.

" Father," she said, fixing her earnest eyes on his, " I confess my presumption and self-will. I have sinned. Absolve me ! and, oh, save me from myself !"

The priest bowed his head as if in prayer, and for some time an intense stillness pervaded the chapel ; the rays of the setting sun streamed through the western window, and lighted the pale brow and silvered hair of the Father with an unearthly gleam.

" Mother of Heaven ! I thank thee," he exclaimed, while his deep voice reverberated through the cloisters, " that thou hast brought back this wanderer to thy fold ; keep and guard her within its sacred enclosure, endow her with thine own grace of holy submission, and teach her to bow to thy will, spoken by the voice of thy servant."

He ceased, and again for a few moments was silent, while Dora wept bitterly.

" One test of submission do I now require, my daughter, ere absolution can be vouchsafed ; your guilt, as a child of the Church, nourished and brought up under her very banner, is peculiarly great, and must be specially atoned for. Take, then, here and now, a solemn vow of unqualified obedience to all her commands—of entire surrender of yourself and all you possess to her disposal."

An agony like an earthquake shock convulsed the soul of Dora—that hope, repressed and disallowed, nameless and indistinct, that, amidst the wreck of her happiness, had never ceased

to shine, must she resign it?—it would not be. She was no longer her own—had she not promised to live for him, though apart from him?

"I cannot, Father!"

The priest's countenance changed—a terrific anger darted its lightnings into her very soul.

"Go, then, accursed of Heaven!" he exclaimed; "descend to perdition, and drag along with you all you have loved and valued most on earth!"

CHAPTER XV.

"'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awaken'd the crowing cock;
Tu-whit—Tu-whoo—
. . . . . .
The lovely lady Christabel,
Whom he' father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late—
A furlong from the Castle gate?"

CHRISTABEL.

On a bright evening in autumn, Mr. Mowbray was returning towards the Castle, when he was met by Lord Belmont, who was with Lady Fitzgerald and Cecilia, paying a short visit at Carlington.

"I was anxious to see you, Mr. Mowbray," he said; "could you give me a few moments' conversation?"

"Certainly," said the priest, immediately returning; "can I be of any use?"

"I trust you can," said Lord Belmont in an agitated tone of voice. "I wish to ask your advice in a matter which deeply concerns me. You must have seen," he continued, "my regard *for Miss Mowbray*. I would value her esteem more than any

other blessing life could give ; may I hope that you will be my intercessor ?"

The priest was silent.

"You should have my best wishes, Lord Belmont," he said at last, "were you of the same faith with Miss Mowbray ; but, as her guardian, I could not consent to her union with one of a different faith."

"But such a barrier as this might not be difficult to remove, Mr. Mowbray. My mother was a Catholic, and I have always regarded her faith with veneration."

"If your convictions," said the priest, "lead you to profess the true faith, there is no one to whom I would more willingly resign the guardianship of one so dear. I must warn you, however, that it will be difficult, though I think not impossible, to win her affections."

That night, Dora observed that Lord Belmont joined the party usually assembled for worship in the chapel. As Protestants, Lady Fitzgerald and Cecilia were always absent, and Lord Belmont had hitherto remained with them.

A few days after this conversation, there was to be a large evening party at Carlington.

On the morning, before Dora had left her room, she received a bouquet of beautiful camellias from Glenarvon, accompanied by the following lines :—

TO A WHITE CAMELLIA.

Fair vestal of a sunnier land,
Hast thou uncheer'd seclusion vow'd?
Or wilt thou in a sister's hand,
Mix with the gay and giddy crowd?

The brightest light that yet has shone
Upon thy cheek of velvet snow,
Was light that came from heaven alone,
Heavenward again as pure to go.

No fitful climate flush'd thy brow,
To blight it with a sudden chill ;
The fragrant atmosphere till now,
Breathed around thee pure and still.

Thy comrades in rich robes array'd,
Unenvied play'd their various parts,
And murmuring bees alone convey'd
The secrets of their wounded hearts.

Undimm'd, will thy young virgin eye
Sustain the rude world's dazzling glare?
And will thy bosom's purity,
Untainted, breathe the feverish air?

Shoals of visitors poured in towards evening, and the Castle presented a festive appearance, that accorded little with the feelings of its owner. There were several strangers present, whom Dora now met for the first time, and her appearance created a universal sensation.

Simply dressed in black velvet, with a *bandeau* of pearls round her raven hair—her only other ornament was Lord Belmont's white camellias—she seemed the pure vestal of some sacred shrine.

"I have great pleasure in these beautiful flowers, Lord Belmont," she said. "We have not any here yet; indeed, I think I never saw any so early."

"It is a privilege to be able to afford you any gratification, Miss Mowbray," replied Lord Belmont.

He spoke with such a melancholy feeling, that Dora's attention was attracted, and she continued to converse with him for some time. The kindness of her manner, arising from his supposed unhappiness, intoxicated him with delight; and, as she turned to leave the spot, he found courage to say—

"I am going to Glenarvon in a few days, Miss Mowbray, where I intend to spend the winter; will you allow me sometimes to ride over and attend service in the chapel here?"

Dora stopped, and looked at him with surprise.

"You are a Protestant, Lord Belmont," said she; "how can you wish to worship with us?"

"I am, or rather was, a Protestant," he replied; "but I have heard much here which disposes me to doubt the truth of

that faith, and I would willingly enjoy the further benefit of Mr. Mowbray's instructions."

"What is truth," she answered gravely, "is indeed an awfully important question: we shall be glad to see you when you are so disposed."

The *fête* was over; the guests had departed, and all was silence and darkness. Glad of solitude, Dora hastily dismissed her attendants, and, when the Castle was quiet, indulged her longing for the cool night air, and, descending by private steps, went out upon the lawn. She was surprised to see a light in one window of the chapel. It was no vigil, and she had believed all the inmates of the Castle to be ere now buried in sleep.

Before she could reach the door, it opened, and two figures issued from it, whom she almost immediately recognized as Cecilia and Father Adrien. She was about to advance towards them, but they quickly turned aside without observing her. As they did so, the priest said—"The concealment of your faith for the present is a necessity imposed upon you by the will of the Church—do not regard it as deceit."

Dora heard no more. She watched till they entered the Castle. Surprised, she lingered in the quiet moonlight till she thought all was again quiet, and then returned to her room.

These few minutes had been employed in considering what ought to be her own course of action regarding the secret of which she had become the unwilling depositary. That Cecilia had changed or was about to change her faith, was evident, and that Dora had no right to betray this without her consent was equally so; but she felt anxious regarding her cousin. Though only a year younger, Cecilia was far inferior to her in experience and knowledge of the world; and her confidence in Father Adrien was already too much shaken, for her to feel that one so artless and unsuspecting should be intrusted alone to his guidance. She determined at last to speak to Cecilia, try to win her confidence, and advise her strongly to confide her secret.

to Lady Fitzgerald. As soon as she had thus determined her course of action, she went to her cousin's room, and found her kneeling before a crucifix; but she hastily rose as Dora entered, and received her affectionately, though with a good deal of embarrassment.

"I fear, dear Cecilia," said Dora, "that I have become acquainted with a circumstance you wished to conceal. I was in the lawn just now, when you passed with Father Adrien, and I learned by his words that you have changed your faith, and have done so secretly. If you have changed from a love of truth, I cannot regret it; though to have the light of God is of far more importance to us than to belong to any particular denomination; but why should this change be concealed from those who care most for your welfare?—why should that which professes to be coming to the light be done in darkness and secrecy?"

While Dora spoke, Cecilia listened with her eyes bent on the ground; she was very pale, but showed no other sign of agitation. There was silence for some time after Dora ceased; at last Cecilia said—

"Since my secret is discovered, Dora, I am glad it is only by one in whose keeping it is safe; I have changed my faith for what I believe to be the only true one, and some months ago was admitted a member of the Catholic Church; further than this I cannot tell you, except that, for reasons I am convinced are right, I must at present conceal the change from my mother."

"There may be reasons, Cecilia, for your acting contrary to a mother's advice, but there can be none that should induce you to conceal your course of action from one so wise and good: take care you do not fall into the power of a counsellor less tender and true than she."

Cecilia started, and changed color

She looked up at Dora, as if to inquire against whom she

meant to warn her, but seemed relieved when her cousin continued—

"Father Adrien is able to enlighten you in the knowledge you wish for, but it is well that all your intercourse with him should be open to the eye of your earliest and best friend. Does not her very confidence reproach you, Cecilia? can you bear to deceive her?"

Cecilia burst into tears.

"O no!" she said; "when I told you it was right, I tried to deceive myself more than you. It is wrong and vilely ungrateful, but I am bound by a chain I cannot break. Do not urge me, for you only add to the torture you cannot relieve."

"I must urge you, my dear Cecilia, to free yourself at once from the net in which you are entangled: remember all that is true seeks the light. If you are right, why withhold your confidence from your best friend?—if you are wrong, who so able to guide and assist you? Come with me now," she continued, earnestly; "do not lose a moment, but open your heart at once to her."

"I cannot, I cannot!" replied Cecilia, in a tone of agony; "it is in vain—it is impossible! Heaven knows the misery which this concealment has caused me!—but one promise at least I will make—that the moment I can disclose all, I will. In the mean time, I can trust you will not betray me."

"You may," answered Dora; "but a heavy responsibility has fallen upon me in thus becoming acquainted with your secret, until all is revealed to Lady Fitzgerald. I must try to preserve you from the snares with which, I fear, you are surrounded."

"Yes," said Cecilia, returning Dora's embrace—"watch and care for me as for a sister. I shall feel less lonely and desolate now that you share in part the secret that has lain so heavy on my heart."

A few days after this, Lady Fitzgerald and Cecilia left Carlington *to go abroad*, where, on account of Cecilia's health, it was

necessary that they should pass the winter. Dora was extremely anxious at the idea of Cecilia's leaving her without any one to supply her place in watching over the safety of one so unsuspecting. After some consideration, she determined, without betraying Cecilia's confidence, to speak to Lady Fitzgerald of the danger she thought a mind like hers might be in when exposed to the various influences that would surround her.

"Do you intend to remain long in Paris?" she inquired, on the day before they were to leave her, as she was sitting alone with her aunt.

"No; I shall only rest there for a short time, perhaps a week, and then go on to the south, where we hope to meet Eustace."

"You spent a good deal of time in Paris when you were last abroad?"

"We did. Cecilia enjoyed the society we met there; but, now that her health is delicate, she seems rather disposed for quiet and retirement."

"My dear aunt," said Dora, after a short pause, "I often feel anxious about Cecilia—she is so gentle and unsuspecting, and her mind is too much under the control of her feelings to be at all times a safeguard for her. She will be surrounded in Paris by various opinions. I do not say whether they would lead her to truth or not, but some would certainly lead her from what you consider truth. It may seem officious in me to say this, dear aunt, but will you be very careful that Cecilia is always under your influence?"

"I will, my dear faithful child," said Lady Fitzgerald, embracing her tenderly; "I am not unaware of the danger—alas! I have cause to feel it too acutely; but it comforts me to know you share my anxiety."

She then told Dora all she knew of Cecilia's attachment to the Count Romilli; and when Dora heard of that dark man's ascendancy over her cousin's mind, she was no longer at a loss to account for her adoption of the Catholic faith, but doubly *regretted her mother's* ignorance of it. She made another effort

that night to induce Cecilia to unburden her heart to her mother. She met with the same tender affection as before, but with no better success, and they parted—Dora obliged to be satisfied in the knowledge of Lady Fitzgerald's watchful care.

Their absence made a dreary void in Dora's existence, and she felt unprotected and alone ; but her young heart was inured to suffering, and she calmly bowed to this new stroke.

CHAPTER XVI.

"A monk, I tell you ; a resolved villain."

KING JOHN.

It was a stormy evening, late in autumn ; the wind swept in fitful gusts over the sea, dashing the waves in high surges against the rocks, and shaking the few leaves which still lingered on the forest boughs. A small boat lay anchored in a cove, two sailors were waiting in it, and had much difficulty in keeping their vessel from being injured by the storm. At some distance up the beach, sheltered by a projecting rock, stood two persons in earnest conversation.

"Your plans have then prospered, brother," said Count Romilli—"or would do so, but for the determined obstinacy of that young heretic."

"We shall find means, Father, to subdue it yet," replied his companion ; "in present circumstances, her constancy cannot long endure."

"She has given a good specimen of her powers of endurance already," replied the Count, with a sneer ; "but the plan you propose is certainly the best ; great difficulties would attend her abduction from this country ; besides, we have the advantage

of a new convert; his wealth, you say, is great, and he is completely under your influence."

"Entirely; though I know not how long he will continue so, were the tool by which I mould him thrown aside."

"How did she receive your first proposal of a union with Lord Belmont?" inquired the Count.

"With utter rejection," replied the priest. "I believe she had not the smallest suspicion of his attachment, until I informed her of it."

"But why did you not allow him to do so himself?" inquired the Jesuit, quickly; "he might have pleaded with better success."

"She would have told him at once that her heart was pre-engaged, and, with his over-scrupulous folly, the matter would have been at an end; as it was, his shyness assisted our designs, and in all their intercourse during the summer, nothing escaped him which could arouse her suspicions. When I told her of his attachment, she begged me to tell him it was impossible she could ever return it, and desired me never to mention the subject again. Without informing him of any previous affection existing on her part, I modified her refusal, and encouraged him to hope—only advising him to retire, in the mean while, to Glenarvon, and promising to recal him the moment his presence would be of use. Before this winter is over, she will be glad to receive him."

"I do not think so, brother," said the Jesuit, with a gesture of impatience. "I have seen that girl but for three days, and yet I am sure you may break her heart, but never bend her spirit."

"Her spirit shall bend," replied the priest, almost hissing through his half-closed teeth, "or a worse fate awaits her!"

"Well, try your best," said the other; "though I do not understand the imprudence of allowing her to associate so freely last summer with her heretic relations."

"Any effort to prevent that would have endangered the partial submission she was beginning to yield; and besides, the

risk was less than you suppose. Though her fidelity to Sir Eustace forbade her giving me the promise of unqualified obedience, she bows in everything else to my authority, and readily promised never to touch upon the subject of religion with Lady Fitzgerald—a promise which I know she strictly kept. Now that they have gone from the neighborhood, all danger is over."

"Yes," said the Count, "the other girl is of more malleable stuff; she is all tenderness and devotion, clinging to a faith of which she knows as little as she does of him who has led her into it."

"She is easily managed," said Father Adrien; "but not so her mother and brother; as well try to beguile the arch-fiend as to subdue him either by force or skill."

"The end is secured, nevertheless," replied the Jesuit, carelessly. "As soon as she is of age, I shall claim her by virtue of our private marriage, of which I have taken good care to retain sufficient proofs; her fortune is then entirely at her own disposal; we shall secure it, and retire to Italy, and then——"

"And then—the bird is caged for ever, I suppose," returned his companion. "But how did you acquire so rapid an influence over her? These good girls educated by mothers like Lady Fitzgerald are the most difficult of all to win; they have such an obstinate and simple sense of duty, that argument is thrown away upon them."

"I should have found her difficult enough to convince, I believe," returned the Jesuit, "and somewhat insensible to my powers of attraction; but I employed an agent that she could not resist."

"You do not mean the black art?" inquired his companion.

"I do," said the other. "She yielded quickly to the fascination, and would follow me over the world. By the bye, why have you never tried it with the other?"

"I might as well mesmerize that sea! I did try at first, but the influence was wholly powerless; successful in one way or other, however, we shall be."

"You will drive her mad before you subdue her."

"Well, if we should, it will answer; however, we shall try the other plan first."

"Then let me hear of your progress. And the old woman?"

"She is safe, but I should gladly send her out of the way; there is danger of those prying domestics discovering her retreat."

"Could you not bring her here? we could lie in the cove till dark; it will be high water then, and will quickly float us. Gag the old beldam, and send her on board; I will carry her to France."

"That will do," said his friend; "I will go and prepare matters."

"Do you want assistance?—these fellows are secret; one of them could go with you."

"No; my servant will be sufficient."

"Make haste, then; it is nearly dark."

Father Adrien hastened towards the Castle, while his superior kept watch on the beach. He summoned his servant, and, touching a pannel in his room, it slid back, and discovered a staircase concealed in the depth of the wall. They followed its windings to the top of the Castle, passing in their way more than one suspicious-looking recess; and, applying a key to the door which terminated the ascent, they entered a turret chamber, dimly lighted by a circular window in the roof. A bed, table, and chair, were all the furniture it contained; and although the weather was cold, there was no stove or fireplace. The moon, now high in the heavens, shed into it a fitful light, bursting, as they entered, from behind the clouds which obscured it. A sudden gleam fell upon the bed, and lighted the careworn features and silver hair of an old woman, who lay in a profound slumber upon it.

She started at the noise of the door opening, but, without awaking, convulsively grasped the bed-clothes.

"My child! my child!" she exclaimed; "they have murdered her!—ochone, ochone!"

A sudden shade darkened the priest's brow—it might be remorse, or some momentary touch of pity; whatever the feeling, he threw it back, and coming close to the bed, shook the old woman, to awaken her.

She started up, and throwing back the gray locks from her face, gazed around with terror. The moon was again behind a cloud, and the room lighted only by a dark lantern, which the servant carried.

"Is it afther my blissed child you'd be sending me!" she exclaimed. "Well, well, so best; if the young tree be down, why should the ould withered stump be left standin'?—but oh! iv ye be men, wid the touch of pity in your hearts, as ye hope for heaven, an' luke for the marcy iv the blissed saint, tell me what ye've done wid her!"

"She is safe with those who can take care of her," said the priest; "get up, and come along with me."

"Does she live? does she live? blissin's on ye, if id be the thruth ye're spaking! Oh! let me but look upon her face, an' I swear by the Holy Mother an' all the saints, that I'll niver tell the words I heard, or say you'd ever thought to harm her!"

The priest only replied by a signal to the man, who seized and prepared to gag her; but, breaking from his hold, with a strength almost supernatural, she threw herself on her knees at the feet of the priest, and clung to him with frantic vehemence.

"Are ye God's ministher, an' can ye work this wickedness! Sure it's His vengeance will fall on yer head, if ye shed the blood iv a defenceless ould crathur; but oh! if my death will save her, take my life, an' welcome!"

"Quick, you idiot!" exclaimed the priest, as the man again tried to secure her; "the whole Castle will hear her screams."

He succeeded at last, but not until two or three wild unearthly shrieks, in quick succession, had made the vaulted roofs ring again They then completely enveloped her in a large

cloak, and, lifting her in his arms with as much ease as he would an infant, the man began to descend the stairs, preceded by Father Adrian, who opened a door in one of the recesses leading from the stair, and, following for some distance a winding passage, descended another stair, terminated by a door. This also yielded to his touch, and they found themselves upon a platform outside the Castle. The door was artfully concealed behind a projecting buttress, thickly covered with ivy, so that no one could discover it who was not previously aware of its existence.

As they continued their descent, by steps rudely cut in the rock, they were met by a girl, who had been drawing water from a well at the bottom. The priest was muffled in his cloak, and a Spanish hat drawn over his brow, so that she could not recognize him ; and the gigantic form of the servant, with his burden, looked sufficiently unearthly.

Dropping her pitcher on the steps, the girl fled, making the air resound with her shrieks.

"Be quick, or that jade will have the whole household after us," said the priest.

They soon reached the bottom of the dingle, and hastened quickly, yet cautiously, along ; but they had not gone far, when they heard the doors of the Castle open, and could indistinctly see through the trees a troop of domestics, armed with broomsticks, pokers, and whatever else they could most readily get hold of, issue from it.

A more vigorous struggle of his hapless burden made Antonio aware that the old woman was not unconscious of the chance of rescue.

"We are lost," he whispered.

"Fool, come here !" said the priest, pushing him into a summer house close at hand.

He raised a trap-door, and Antonio descending, was followed by the priest, who secured it above their heads. A long subterraneous passage opened before them, and following its wind-

ings about half a mile, they emerged into a cave upon the shore. The tide was now nearly high, and the hollow roar of the water was heard at the mouth of the cavern. The priest sounded a peculiar call; immediately after, the splash of oars was distinctly audible, and a boat approached the cave. The priest spoke a few words in Italian to one of the men, who replied in the same language; then stretching out his arms, he received the burden from the hands of Antonio, threw, rather than laid, it in the bottom of the boat, and again taking the oar, rowed quickly back to the little vessel that awaited them.

A glance of the moon at this instant shone over the troubled water, and showed all the sails set. The boat reached it; a dark object was lifted on board, followed by the men, and bending its gunwale almost under the water, it dashed quickly on its course. As it vanished, a gust of wind closed the door by which the priest and Antonio had entered the cavern; the waters were rising high, and the waves already beginning to flood the cave.

"Here! quick! Antonio, the key!" exclaimed the priest, as he turned from gazing after the vessel, and saw what was taking place. "By Saint Nicholas, we shall be drowned in this rat-hole!"

The water was gaining upon them—already it was above their ankles; dark and heavy, the surges rolled in with fearful rapidity, resounding in hollow echoes from the arched roof, and the white spray dashed in showers over their heads. It was dark, and Antonio tried in vain to fix the key.

"Get out of the way!" exclaimed the priest at length, "and give it to me."

As the man moved to do so, the key slipped from his hand, and fell into the water.

"We are lost!" exclaimed the priest. "Holy Mary, have mercy on us!" They sought for the key long, but in vain—the cavern was flooded with sand, into which it must have sunk. The water rose to their waists. Frantic with terror, Antonio

poured forth prayer after prayer to the Virgin and all the saints. He gave himself up for lost, and made not the slightest effort for deliverance, while, silent, stern, and resolute, the priest dashed blow after blow of his vigorous arm against the door, through which lay their only hope of escape. Roused by the efforts of his master, Antonio aided him—the door shook—it yielded; they rushed forward, pursued by the tide; the passage was low and narrow, and their safety even now was not secured—gasping, almost overwhelmed, they pressed on. The passage began to ascend—they were safe.

CHAPTER XVII.

"And over all there is a fear,
The shadow of a doubt—the spirit daunted—
That said as plain as whispers in the ear—
The place is haunted."

TENNYSON'S "HAUNTED HOUSE."

"You may say what you like, O'Brien," said Mrs. O'Riley, as, returning from their unsuccessful sally, they gathered round the fire in her room—"you may say what you like, but the place is haunted, that I'd give my oath on."

"There's for yees, Mrs. Riley," said Kathleen; "the life's out of me wid the frights and starts I'm gittin'."

"Ye have the rights of it, Mrs. Riley," said O'Brien, "though I made sport of it at the first; but it's gittin' rayther beyant a joke now, inyhow. I heard the screams meself to-night, there's no denyin' id, an' was goin' to see could I make out anything out iv them at all afore now."

"Troth, and id's kilt entirely I am," said Kathleen, "wid *the cries and the* vinasthrus I hear betimes in the dead iv night

—not a wink iv slape can I git for thim—the saints betune us and harm !"

"Well, thin, Mrs. Riley," said O'Brien, lowering his voice, and speaking mysteriously, "id's the thruth I'm tellin' ye, I thought there was a sound iv Mrs. O'Sullivan's voice in the cries we heard to-night."

"It's pipers' news ye'd be comin' over us wid," replied his friend ; "hav'n't both Kathleen and meself been tellin' you, Mr. O'Brien, ever since Mrs. O'Sullivan was lost, that's as sure as anything her ghost haunts the place, an' they needn't be lookin' for her back?—more be token, Kathleen heard her before she'd been a month gone ; and I heard her meself too one night, as I was comin' home late from her house—I heard her voice as plain as I hear yours, just through the air over me head. 'Help, help !' was the cry, three times—sore an' hard must have been the struggle, whin the spirit could not rest. I hurried into the house, an' said a prayer for the peace iv her sowl."

"Iv id was not for the sake iv the misthress,—more luck to her !—it's not here I'd be stayin' at all," exclaimed Kathleen.

"Indeed, thin, an' small blame to ye, girl," said Mrs. O'Riley ; "I wouldn't be stoppin' meself, only for the same raison ; id's not that I mind the ghosts so much eider—they might appear and we be none the worse afther all ; but there's much goin' on here that I'd rather not be witness to ; and if that sweet young crathur's sent to an early grave, I would not like to stand in Father Adrien's shoes."

"Mercy on us, Mrs. Riley !" said Kathleen, "dare ye be spakin' that way iv the praste ! I'd be frightened he'd put some judgment on me ; shure, is not all he does for the salvation iv her sowl ? for I've heard it said, she's got the sthrange notions put into her head by that hiritic lady, and a good lady she is for all ; but inyhow, id's a mortal sin to be tratin' a young crathur that way ; an' though I've a care what I say, I may be thinkin' my own thought for all that ; an' I know Mrs. Harris is a black-hearted woman, if she be not somethin' worse.

b'lieve she gets help from those one should not spake about, so I do—an' that she can put herself in two places at oncet. Id's only the other day I'd been in the chapel, an' she came in to say her prayers. She kneeled down afore the althar very devout. I left the chapel whin I seen her, to go up to me lady's room, for id's not often we can get spache iv her. I wint quick, an' gi'n a knock at the dure. 'Come in,' says me lady; and whin I opened the dure, there, to be shure, was Mrs. Harris standin' forninst me. I gev sich a scream, for the start took hould iv my heart—an' 'What's the matter, girl?' said she. 'Nothin' ma'am, says I, 'but a pain I was taken wid iv a sudden.' 'Then go away down stairs,' says she, 'and don't be disturbing your lady that's lying down to rest.' I kem away; but my belief is, an' iver will be, eider that she can make herself seen in two places at oncet, or else id was not herself I seen in the chapel at all, at all, but somethin' worse, in her shape."

"Well," said O'Brien, "av she's knowin' more than she ought, couldn't we spake to the praste, an' he'd thry her wid the holy water? an' shure I am, it's truth the girl was spakin'; for one night id was near dark, an' I was goin' through the long passage to the hall, whin I saw her walkin' afore me, and jist as I kem near, she wint through the wall, an' shure it was the solid stone itself she passed through, for niver a sign iv a dure wes at the place."

"Fait thin, O'Brien," said Mrs. O'Riley, "you'd bether lave alone spakin to his rivirence—remimber the luke ye had afore whin ye huddled wid her: the best we can all do is, to be kapin' ourselves quiet, only to be always doin' what we can for our young lady."

"An' is it doin' what ye can for her, Mrs. Riley, to be resavin' all your orders from that woman?" said O'Brien.

"None knows bether than yerself Misther O'Brien," said Mrs. O'Riley, "that I'd be sarvin' me lady wid the best blood in me body; and afther I'd put up many times wid that furriner's pokin' an' pryin' into everythin' undher me care, thinkin' it wes

all along iv me lady's sickness, 'Miss Beauford,' says I, 'I'll be givin' an account iv all thim things to me lady whin she's able to go about agin.' So she tuk no notice; but I couldn't put up wid it long, for I saw how the young thing was trampled undher their feet, an' sorra a one to take part wid her, an' I spoke out plainer; but I'd bether not have done it, for she tould his rivirence, an' he was mighty hard upon me entirely—not that I mind the pinnance, but id's throuble an' sorrow we'd be bringin' upon the young crathur, an' she's plenty iv id lyin' upon her already."

"It's my belief," said O'Brien, "they're breakin' in her spirit that they may make her marry that young lord that's turned a Catholic to plase Father Adrien; an' if I was her, I think I'd do it afore I'd stand all the throuble they're bringin' upon me."

"Id would maybe be as well for her if she would," replied Mrs. O'Riley gravely. "Sir Eustace is beyant the seas, an' maybe will niver be back agin; an' if he does, they'd not be let luk at one another; but me lady will niver think of another, so they may as well let her alone. O'Brien, lock the dures, will ye?—it's gittin' late."

"I'd giv' a good dale," said O'Brien, as he retired, "to know who it was goin' into the summer-house to-night—one thing I'm sure iv, id was nothin' belongin' to this world!"

"Why did you not follow id in?" said Mrs. O'Riley.

"In throth, an' I was not near enough for that," answered O'Brien; "but Lanty wint in an' said id must have gone through the ground iv id wint in at all; for there was not a hole a rat could creep out at, and his eyes was on the dure all the time."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The idea that an evil fate hung over her attachment, became predominant over her other feelings; and the gloom of superstition darkened a mind already sufficiently weakened by sorrow, distress, uncertainty, and an oppressive sense of desertion and desolation. Stories were told by her attendant, so closely resembling her own in their circumstances, that she was gradually led to converse upon such tragic and mystical subjects with the beldam, and to repose a sort of confidence in the sibyl, whom she still regarded with involuntary shuddering."—*Bride of Lammermoor.*

"It must be so, Dora," said the priest, at the end of a long conference; "your safety, and the interests of the Church demand it; yield, I implore you, that perverse will, which would lose heaven and earth rather than turn from its object."

"Urge me not, Father," exclaimed Dora, rising. "Heaven witnessed my vow never to wed another, and nothing shall compel me to break it."

"Be still, mad girl!" he exclaimed; "there are means to compel you to the submission you refuse. Could I undraw the curtain, and show you the vista of horrors that continued rebellion will open before you, you would tremble to go further."

"I scorn your vengeance," said Dora, "and defy your power; you may kill this body, but though you wear it out by lengthened tortures, it can but die; my body to the grave, and my soul to the mercy of my God—where is then your power?"

She laughed in scorn as she spoke, and the beauty of her young pale face was fearful.

"*Hope not* for such escape," said the priest; "death comes

not always to the weary, and lingering years of wasting solitude are worse than the mortal pang."

"And can you condemn me to solitude?" asked Dora. "You may bind the body, but can you rivet fetters on the free spirit, or hinder its deep communion? Prepare your bolts and bars—carry me to the lowest dungeon of my home; and when you have bound me there, see if you have shut out the bright influences which steal through the prison walls."

"I have known captives," replied the priest, "who have not seen the sun, or breathed the air of heaven, while twenty years have rolled over their heads."

"Let it be so," replied Dora. "Each year as it passes will bring my spirit nearer to the light of truth—will hasten the time when it shall breathe the air of immortality. Do your worst, and you will but nourish the faith, which grows more precious the longer it is tried."

"You will welcome, then, perhaps, the flames of purgatory?" replied the priest, with a malignant sneer. "Go! child of evil, to your room! Go! unblest of God!—unabsolved of Heaven! Go! and defend yourself, if you can, against the spirits who haunt the solitude of the accursed!"

Dora heard him, but the meaning of his words did not seem to penetrate her mind. The glow which had lighted her features but a few moments before had passed; she was pale as marble, and the fixed dreamy gaze of her eyes seemed to look into things that others saw not. The priest repeated—

"Go!" and she mechanically withdrew.

His eyes followed her with a glance of fiendish malignity.

"Proud spirit, thy fall is at hand!" he muttered. "These convulsive throes but presage thy coming ruin."

The evening of that day stole soft and clear over the wintry scene. Dora had sought her favorite haunt on the sea-shore. The tide was high, and sullenly boomed at her feet; it was the swell of a past storm, for the air was still, and the leafless branches stirred not. As she sat there on the lonely rock, the

veil seemed very thin which separated her from the spirit-world; and the deep mysterious light which shone in her eyes was not of earth; her shadowy form and marble features hardly belonged to mortality. Suddenly a smile lighted her face—she fancied she heard a strain of music floating in the air.

At the same moment a gleam broke forth from the setting sun, and shed a long line of brightness over the dark and troubled water. Dora clasped her hands.

"It is thou, my mother! Come, then, oh! come, and take thy child to thy spirit breast! Oh, mother! I am weary, weary, and the way is long and dark!"

She was silent, but lingered there till the bright gleam faded, and night fell dark and sullen over the waters; and then she rose, and took the homeward path through the wood. When she reached the gate of the Castle, Harris met her. Dora shuddered as she approached. The quiet dignity with which she used to repel her was changed into a recoil of fear, and she shrunk before her serpent eye. Harris's whole manner to her, too, was changed. There was no longer any of the haughty assumption, the insulting show of a delegated authority. She seemed too secure of power to exhibit it. She supported Dora's feeble steps—for the strength of excited feeling was gone—and bore her almost fainting to her room. She laid her on a couch. The light of a wood fire flickered upon the hearth, sometimes blazing, sometimes dying away. Harris sat at the foot of the couch on which Dora lay, her eyes fixed on those of her young mistress, and gradually the fainting girl withdrew her gaze from the darkness, and met that strange searching look.

"Do you not fear to walk alone in the woods at night?" said Harris, at last breaking the long silence.

"No," said Dora, quietly; "why should I fear?"

"Because you are not alone there."

Dora started and shuddered.

"I do not wish to be alone," she said; "those who are with *me protect me.*"

"Not always," returned Harris, in a low sepulchral tone. "I waited in England upon a young lady, such as you are; she was beautiful, and of noble birth—the idol of her father. She was educated in a convent, and destined for the veil; but while she was at home visiting her relations, before her final return from the world, she met with a young officer to whom she became attached, and for his sake she broke her vows; the priest refused her absolution, but she went on in defiance of the Church's malediction. Her father consented to her wishes, and preparations were made with great pomp and splendor for the marriage. On the night before it took place, I remember well, I was in attendance upon my lady till a late hour. 'My heart misgives me, Harris,' she said, 'that some evil is about to befall.' 'Make your peace with the Holy Church, madam,' I said; 'it is a fearful thing to be under her ban.' 'I will remain under the curse of the Church rather than give up this union.' I left her, but there was a dark look on her brow that I never forgot. That night she was awoke from sleep by hearing a movement in the room; and, looking up, she saw Colonel Vivian standing by her bed; she thought he had mistaken the room, and spoke to him, but he did not answer. He gazed at her with a strange look, and waving his hand towards the door, slowly retired, keeping his eyes fixed upon her. In the morning he was found dead in his bed. The priest refused to anoint him, as he died without reconciliation to the Church, and he was buried without its holy rites. On the night of the funeral the whole house was aroused by a fearful noise proceeding from my lady's room. We hastened towards it, and found her in strong convulsions; she expired raving mad three days after."

While telling this fearful tale, Harris kept the same steady gaze upon Dora, who never removed her eyes, and seemed unable to turn from the strange fascination. She shuddered when her attendant had finished, and a more deathlike paleness overspread her face—she closed her eyes, but, opening them again, seemed drawn under the strange influence of her attendant's presence.

Gradually her eyelids grew heavy, and a deep repose, which looked more like death than sleep stole over her frame. She lay long in that trance-like rest; at last it became disturbed, and confused murmurs escaped her—"Oh! he is in danger! —save him!—who is that?—Eustace! have you forgotten?"—her voice sunk into low and indistinct whispers, and she awoke.

Her eyes still retained a look of terror.

"I have had strange dreams," she said, "but I cannot recal them."

"We are not always dreaming when such impressions are made on the mind," answered Harris; "there may be beings near who can lift the curtain of the future, or carry our spirits where our mortal senses cannot go."

"It may be so," said Dora, thoughtfully; "but there is nothing in that to alarm. Communion with the spirit-world is permitted to console the weary and the broken-hearted."

"Yes," replied Harris; "but sometimes spirits of evil frequent the path of those who despise holy authority."

Harris watched till slumber again stole over her, then rose, and, lighting a small lamp, went to the priest's room. He was sitting at a table covered with papers, which he threw aside as she entered.

"How is your charge?" he said.

"Very ill to-night," she replied. "Father, you must speed your plans, or they will be stopped ere completed."

"How do you mean?" he inquired; "by her death?"

"Yes; the fever of the heart takes a long time to kill, but her strength is sinking fast."

"Ah!" said the priest, knitting his dark brows, "we must prepare the final shock, then; she may not have strength to stand it now; but if not, our purposes will be gained either way."

"Not so surely," returned Harris; "remember the suspicions of her Protestant relations have been already awakened

Should anything happen, they will make a strict investigation, and the laws here are not so easily evaded as in France"

"Be still, woman!" exclaimed the priest, fiercely; "have I not absolved you from the past?"

"Yes, but to plunge me in new crimes," she said, bitterly; "that murdered girl will not the less surely haunt my path because her life has been wrung out by slow degrees."

"Be still, be still!" said the priest, fiercely, "all you have done, and all you are now required to do, is in the service of the Church, and her rewards are sure."

"I care not for her rewards; let her restore peace to this troubled heart—let her give rest to my soul, and slumber to my eyes, and she may keep her rewards, for I want them not!"

"Hush! this is folly," said the priest; "go on with your work—your safety shall be secured, and your reward exceed your utmost desires; hesitate, turn back, or suffer the work committed to you to miscarry by your absurd scruples, and I swear, that your punishment shall be such as will make your very flesh tremble to hear of."

She was silent—the momentary voice of her awakened conscience was stilled, and the priest regained his usual ascendancy.

"I could sometimes believe," continued Harris, at last, "that she draws real strength from converse with invisible beings, for that so young and defenceless a girl, alone and unaided, could suffer as she has suffered, and do as she has done, seems nothing short of supernatural."

"She is a splendid creature," said the priest, "and in the service of the Church would do wonders; but she shall be used as a tool to advance its interests, whether her own destruction or safety be the consequence. Go now, and I will take such measures that our work will soon be accomplished. But stay—you still find the other influence successful?"

"Increasingly so," said Harris; "she is not aware of it, or she would resist, and we may yet find it of great use."

"It is well," returned the priest; "now retire."

She lingered.

"Have you anything more to say?" asked the priest.

"No; but the servants must be kept out of the way—that girl Kathleen is the worst—her suspicions are evidently roused, and I meet her at every turn."

"That must be attended to; perhaps it may be well to remove her."

"And Miss Beauford?" inquired Harris.

"Well, what of her?"

"Will she sanction any length to which it may be necessary to go?"

"Certainly not," said the priest; "nor shall we ask her. She is a stupid old fool, who must be used as we have need for her, but not the least likely to interfere; should she attempt to do so, a few words on the Church's authority will soon quiet her; but we must carefully keep out of her way everything that might awaken a doubt. She is not destitute enough of womanly weakness," he continued, with a bitter smile, "to go all the lengths that we require."

The blood rushed to Harris's very forehead, and a fierce retort was upon her lips, but she checked it, and only cast upon him a look, which might have almost withered his existence, which he met in return with a sneer of cool defiance.

"Monster!" she exclaimed, "may the bolts of Heaven fall upon you!"

"And take you in their way," he said calmly; "but come, come, this has gone far enough—go to your work."

Her head drooped upon her breast, and she left the room.

CHAPTER XIX

"No—
I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
And on the proof, there is no more but this."

OTHELLO.

It was the very depth of winter; and the short days stole gloomily away; Dora complained of no illness, but a slow fever was consuming her strength. Harris kept a constant watch upon her, and the mysterious fascination she exercised seemed to prevent the unhappy girl from even wishing to escape from her power.

Miss Beauford was touched by the evidently wasting health of her niece, and no longer opposed what she termed her fancies, while Dora passively submitted to the cares which were now redoubled.

For some time she had heard nothing of Lady Fitzgerald and Cecilia; the last intelligence had been that Cecilia was no better, and that they were gone to the south of France for the winter. She had written more than once since then, but received no reply; she had corresponded with Sir Eustace for some time after his departure, but the priest had long forbidden her to do so, and in this she had passively submitted to his will. Amidst the wreck of her earthly happiness, however, she clung to one cherished belief—she doubted not for one moment his faith, and in this confidence she rested satisfied. Much of her time was passed in *wandering through* the now leafless woods, or upon

the shore, where her mind, intensely overwrought, seemed to hold converse with spiritual beings, and hear their voices on the breeze. All night Harris watched by her, and, as the sleepless, feverish hours passed, told her harrowing tales of strange events and fearful omens, till a mysterious horror, different from the high idealism of her mind, though partaking of its power, took possession of her, and the rustling of a curtain, the moving of a shadow, excited her almost to agony. All her former employments were abandoned save one—she lived in music more intensely than ever; in it she seemed often to find a safety-valve, when reason otherwise might have tottered. But Mr. Mowbray was not long in discovering that from this source the strength of her soul was nourished, and he forbade it. It was depriving her spirit of its daily food, and from that moment it drooped.

"Mr. Mowbray wishes to see you in the library, ma'am," said Harris, as she entered Dora's room, "if you feel able."

Passively, for she had nothing to hope, and she was sinking almost too low to fear, Dora attended the summons.

Mr. Mowbray was alone. He met Dora with greater softness than usual, and led her to a seat by the fire.

"I have just received letters from Italy," he said, after a short pause, "and the contents of one I feel it a painful duty to communicate. May wisdom be given you to profit by the intelligence."

Dora at first listened without any apparent emotion, but as the priest proceeded, she exclaimed, "Oh, speak! Sir Eustace is dead!" and fell senseless on the floor.

The priest was alarmed; he had not anticipated so sudden an effect of his news, and he feared lest the victim should elude his grasp, even when his hopes of success were highest. He hastily called Harris, and had Dora conveyed to bed. Various means were tried to restore her, but for some time without success. When she did recover, she bade Harris ask Mr. Mowbray to *come to her.*

"Come here," she said, as he entered the room, extending to him her cold and lifeless hand; "tell me all—read me the letter."

"You were mistaken," answered the priest, cautiously; "my intelligence was not what you supposed—Sir Eustace lives."

Dora gazed upon him, as if incredulous.

"He lives!" she exclaimed, slowly, as if endeavoring to realize the truth.

The priest waited for a few minutes till her agitation had subsided.

"If Sir Eustace, then, be well and happy, you are satisfied!" he inquired at last.

Dora's look only replied.

"You know," continued the priest, "that the Church never will sanction your union with him. Would it not, then, be well, instead of wasting long years in useless regret, spending the prime of his life in such solitude as the Church demands only from those who have vowed their lives to her service, he should wed one who might be to him what you never can?"

"No!" said Dora, "he would not be happier. Constancy of soul, fidelity and courage, are the true happiness of mortal life. In fulfilling our vocation, we enter upon immortality. To be degraded is to be miserable."

She raised herself in bed as she spoke, her cheek glowed, and her eye brightened.

"Come what may," she exclaimed, "the consciousness of fidelity, the hope of eternal union, is worth it all."

"Sir Eustace does not appear to think so," said the priest. "Raise your soul to a higher union, for he ere now is wedded to another."

"He is not!" exclaimed Dora; "deceit dwells not in his soul."

"Be calm," returned the priest sternly, "and listen."

He unfolded a letter he held in his hand, and read—

"Since my arrival in Rome I have several times met Sir

Eustace Fitzgerald. It is said, and I have no doubt the report is true, that he is shortly to be married to Lady G——. He appeared completely fascinated when at Carlington, and I believed that matters were otherwise, but the tie of consanguinity of course renders that impossible ; and Lady G—— is well qualified to be the companion of such a man. It is asserted that their union is to take place in two or three weeks."

"I believe it not," said Dora, solemnly ; "he could not be so false. From himself alone will I receive such an announcement."

"And if you do receive it from his own hand?" said the priest.

"Then," said Dora calmly, "do with me as you please."

"Swear to me, that, if Sir Eustace be untrue, you will yield yourself to my disposal," said the priest.

"I swear !" replied Dora.

"I shall write this day. Holding, as I do, your father's place, it is my duty to do so."

"No," said Dora, "I will write myself ; I have pledged my faith to him, and to myself alone must that pledge be given back."

"Do, then, as you will. Cruel and tyrannical as you have thought me, Dora, no parent's heart could yearn more tenderly over his child than mine does over you ; and could your earthly happiness have been purchased without sacrificing your eternal interests, how joyfully would my own have been sacrificed to obtain it !"

He placed writing materials before her. With a firm clear hand that bore no trace of weakness, but betokened well the faith she felt, she wrote ; then sealing her letter without offering it to the priest to read, she committed it to his care, and he left the room. She did not see the look of malignant triumph on his dark features as he retired.

No sooner had he gone than she arose, locked her door, and *hastily wrote* a duplicate of the letter she had just concluded.

She had finished, and concealed it about her person, when Harris returned. For some days she found no opportunity of despatching it with safety. At last she met Lanty one morning on the shore.

"God save you, kindly, ma'am, agrah," he said; "is it gittin' your strength back agin you are even now?"

"I am not very well yet, Lanty; but tell me—could I trust you to be faithful if I gave you a commission?"

"Throth, thin, an' it's mesilf would do for ye wid a heart an' a half, an it was askin' me to go on my bare knees to Cork!"

"But then at confession would you feel obliged to tell Father Adrien?" inquired Dora.

"Shure, lady, wouldn't it be aisy to mintion all I remimber, and be confessing in general all I might forgit?"

"But it is only sin you must confess; and there is no sin in doing what your mistress desires."

"Thrue for you, lady dear; but thin the praste has been afther tellin' us that we were niver to carry a lether nor missage for yer ladyship—saving yer presence ma'am—nowhere at all, on pain of gittin' no absolution; but thin if I say things in general this way, one pardon will cover all. Shure it's her that's away (rest her sowl!) that would have bid me do it, for the best blood in her heart was not dearer to her than you."

"Take this letter, then," said Dora, shrinking from a subject that was yet too painful for her to bear, "and put it into the post at Ballyrowan—mind, not at Carlington—the first moment you can go without being observed."

"I'll go this blissed night, afther the horses is in, an' none will be the wiser; an' now, good mornin' to ye, ma'am, for there's his rivirence coming up the shore."

Lanty clambered up the rocks, and in a moment was out of sight. Dora quietly awaited her uncle's approach.

"To whom were you speaking?" he inquired, when he came near

"To Lanty O'Sullivan."

"Were you talking to him of his mother?" he asked, bending a scrutinizing gaze upon her face.

"He mentioned her," said Dora, calmly meeting the gaze; "but, alas! there is little to be said on that subject now."

She turned to ascend the woodland path to the Castle, the priest accompanying her. His conversation seemed designed to throw her off her guard, but this was not now so easily accomplished; it was evident, however, that his suspicions were awakened, and as they reached the Castle, he said—

"You are much stronger now; I did not think you were able to walk so far."

"The sea air does me good," answered Dora, carelessly, "I was longing for it again."

"And you had no other design in going there?" inquired the priest, again turning his eyes full upon her face.

"Yes, I designed to spend an uninterrupted hour of quiet, for I am tried beyond mortal power to bear, and have much need to be sometimes away from human eyes and human voices."

She turned as she spoke, and abruptly entered the Castle.

As Lanty was quietly pursuing his way to Ballyrowan that night, at a turn of the road he confronted Mr. Mowbray.

"It's a fine evening, Lanty," he said; "where are you going?"

"A beautiful evening, shure enough, your rivirence. I was afther seein' my wife's sister's son, who has got his leg hurt wid the plough."

"He lives at Ballyrowan?" said the priest.

"He does, yer rivirence;" and, making his best obeisance, Lanty was about to move on. The priest detained him.

"Lanty," he asked, "do you remember what I have told you, that you must always bring to me any message or letter with which your lady may intrust you?"

"Throth an' I do, yer rivirence; but sorra a lether or missage is her ladyship likely to give to me, whin she has Misther

O'Brien, that undherstands them things far bether nor me, to fetch an' carry for her."

"Then you have never carried any letter or parcel for her, have you?"

"Niver, shure," said Lanty; "niver, yer rivirence—till now," he added to himself; "an' shure that's no lie," he continued aloud.

"Then see you never do," said the priest sternly, "or it will be the worse for you."

So saying, he turned his horse and rode towards Carlington; while Lanty looked after him to be sure he was fairly out of the way, and then pursued his route to Ballyrowan.

"It's no lie that I've tould," he murmured to himself; "an', inyhow, I'm goin' to confession soon, an' I'll ax a general pardon' an' do the pinnance an' all; but fait, his rivirence was afther suspecting somethin' in id, an' maybe now he'll be axin' questions at Ballyrowan what was I doin' there: it would be a thousand pities if harm kem to me lady's lether, for it's need of comfort she has, poor young crathur, inyhow. An' by good luck, there's me cousin the carrier on his road to Ballyshannon, an' I'll jist ax him to take the lether on wid him, an' slip it in the post whin he gets there."

"God save you, Mike!"

"God save you kindly, Lanty! where are you for so late the night?"

"I was goin' to Ballyrowan a message iv me oun; but since I've fallen in wid yees, maybe you'll take this lether, an' put id in the post whin you get to Ballyshannon, an' that would be kapin' me from goin' off me road."

He gave the letter, which his companion promised to take charge of, and post that night.

"But what for are you takin' the lether past Carlington?—shure id would go as well from that post as iny other."

"As well, maybe, but not so soon," said Lanty; "and so good night to yees, Mike, an' a safe journey."

He stood on the hill till he saw that the carrier was past all danger of encountering the priest, and then took a short cut across the fields to Ballyrowan, whither, for consistency's sake, he resolved to go. He had nearly reached the village, when he caught a glimpse of the priest entering it before him. His nephew lived on the near side of the village; and, as the priest seemed anxious to avoid observation, Lanty, entering the house, paid his relation a short visit, and then returned homewards. Looking back after he had gone some distance, he saw Father Adrien enter the house he had just quitted.

"Wasn't it me good luck that I seen his rivirence!" thought Lanty. "I'd have left the lether wid Molly, the crathur, to run to the post wid, an' Molly's a simple woman.

Father Adrien soon ascertained that nothing was to be discovered at Larry's cottage which could throw any light on the secret purpose of Lanty's visit to Ballyrowan—for a secret purpose he did not doubt he had; and, baffled in his purpose, he was slowly riding homewards, pondering the best means of finding out where Lanty had been during the short time he had missed him from the road, for he had evidently considerably diverged from it before he entered Ballyrowan. In the midst of these musings, he saw a shepherd's boy running over the hills in the direction in which Lanty had appeared.

"Have you met any one coming over the hills, boy?" inquired the priest.

"None, yer rivirence," replied the lad, "savin' Mike Doolan, the Ballyshannon carrier."

"And did you speak to him?"

"I got spache to him only for a minit, yer rivirence, for he was in a mortill hurry; he put off his time, he said, spakin' to his cousin, Lanty O'Sullivan; an' it would go hard wid him to reach Ballyshannon afore dark."

This hint was sufficient; and the priest, putting spurs to his horse, rode off in the direction of Ballyshannon.

He soon came up with the carrier, who was slowly leading

his heavy waggon over a piece of boggy ground; the horse passed silently on the marsh, and Mike did not hear the priest's approach. When within a few yards of him, the carrier alighted to lead his horse. As he did so, a small white packet slipped from his breast, and fell upon the ground. He stooped to pick it up, but the priest was already at his side, and the packet in his hands, ere Mike could get hold of it. Startled as he was by the sudden apparition, the unfortunate carrier, who had readily apprehended from his cousin's manner that there was something important in the charge of the letter, made one effort to recover his prize.

"If ye plase, yer rivirence, to be givin' me that lether; it's from the house-steward at Ballyrowan, to his honor Sir Eustace, an' I've charges to forward id without fail."

"I will take charge of it," said the priest; "and listen, Mike: I advise you in future, if you wish to be saved a thousand years in purgatory, to take care how you carry letters from *this* house-steward any more."

He rode off.

"Well, shure now," said Mike to himself, "an' wasn't that misforthunate? but I'll be back again from Ballyshannon the day afther to-morrow, inyhow, an' I'll tell Lanty, maybe he could be gittin' me another line; but id's meself hopes id will not be bringin' the young ladie into any throuble."

Lanty did not discover the failure of his enterprise, but he felt that a strict watch was kept over all his movements. Mike the carrier did not return—a stranger from Ballyshannon brought back his waggon, and reported that he was appointed to another station.

CHAPTER XX.

"If I could see him, it were well with me."

COLERIDGE.

WEEKS passed slowly, and a feverish excitement kept up Dora's strength. Her faith in Sir Eustace for the most part was firm and unshaken, but there were moments when a passing doubt would shadow her mind; and then the awful future—a future bereft of faith and hope, would open before her, and her spirit recoil from the plunge.

Suspense became more intolerable, and these doubts more frequent, as the time drew near when an answer from Italy might be expected. At last the days were numbered, and as post after post arrived, at each announcement her heart-strings vibrated with more intense agony; her overstrained powers could not find rest in sleep—one moment of forgetfulness would have been mercy, but it came not. It became evident to all around that this state could not endure; her cheek was haggard, and the dejection of her countenance had given way to a fitful wildness.

But the crisis was at hand

One morning the priest entered the room with a sealed letter Dora recognized the well-known writing—her brain reeled, but with the strength of despair, she preserved its calmness. The letter contained a brief but guarded expression of unabated *friendship and* esteem; never could the writer hope to find such.

happiness as would have marked a lot blended with hers, but he had aspired too highly—he now felt that he had been guilty in seeking to entangle in the snares of earthly love one peculiarly chosen of Heaven. Long and bitter had been his struggles, but he had succeeded at last in obtaining victory over feelings and hopes dearer to him than life, and he now could resign her to the service of the Church—the only vocation worthy of a spirit so pure and high as hers.

To secure her freedom he had entered into an engagement with Lady G ——, in whom he hoped to find all the consolation that remained for him. He dared not yet trust himself near her, and therefore proposed spending some years in Italy.

The letter fell from Dora's hand, but her features assumed not that expression for which the priest waited. His searching gaze fixed upon her face.

"Sir Eustace Fitzgerald never wrote that letter," she said, quietly. Her deep eyes were turned upon the priest as if she would read his very soul—he shrank not from the scrutiny.

"I have written to Sir Eustace," she said, "and sent my letter by a safe hand. I will await his reply to it."

There was no sign of anger on the priest's countenance, but a well-feigned emotion of pity and surprise.

"My poor child," he said, "how my heart bleeds for you! Alas! for the sickness and sorrow that have weakened your spirit, ere you could suspect me of such foul deceit! But be it so; you have my forgiveness—my full and free forgiveness and blessing; speak but your wishes, name your own time—all shall be as you desire."

For a moment Dora was staggered in her conviction of the priest's duplicity; but her clear eyes were reading his spirit, and saw there no reflection of the truth that reigned in her own.

"In one week," she said, "I look for a reply; in a fortnight, if he be alive, I shall receive it; on this day month, if no answer come, or an answer that confirms the truth of this, you shall do *with me as you will.*"

"A month! my daughter," said the priest; "why delay so long your reconciliation with the Church? why remain impenitent? A fortnight affords more than sufficient time, and for that period she graciously extends her indulgence to her erring child; beyond that, it were sin to require it."

"I have said," replied Dora, calmly, "that until a month is passed, I will not take any step of change; urge me not, for I am resolved!"

The priest knew that remonstrance was vain.

"On this day month, then, you solemnly vow, should no tidings arrive from Sir Eustace, that you will yield yourself to my disposal?"

"I do," she said.

"Give me that promise in writing."

She laughed scornfully.

"Is a written vow more sure than that which the lips have uttered?"

"It may be more unalterable," said the priest.

He placed a paper before her. Dora's eye glanced rapidly over it—she read there a solemn vow of entire resignation, not of herself only, but of her property—she drew back.

"No," she said, "I have promised to resign myself unreservedly; for should this month pass, and bring no tidings, my life will then be a worthless boon; but not my property—that is held as a trust for the good of others; and while I live, it must be so employed."

"It is a mere form of expression, Dora. I only wish to act for you as the steward of your property."

"No," she replied, "it must not be so. I alone am responsible both to the God who gave me this talent, and to the people for whose sake it was intrusted to me."

"And is it not better," he exclaimed, for a moment thrown off his guard, "that I, your father's brother, and, if Heaven denies you children, your next heir, should act for you here, than that all should be committed to a stranger?"

"To what stranger?" she inquired, with a look of absence. "Ah, I remember; but that was a moment of madness. Carlington or a foreign convent may be my prison, but do not—never ask me to wed another, for I cannot—I will not."

"You have sworn it," he said.

"Did I? But I was not mistress of myself."

"As much so as at this moment," he answered, harshly. "And you shall fulfil your promise, or suffer the utmost vengeance of the power you are setting at nought."

"Enough," she replied—"the sacrifice will never be consummated;" and, sinking back in her chair, an expression of deep gloom overspread her countenance. Yet, amidst its darkness, a gleam of unearthly light shone in her eyes—they were fixed on Father Adrien, and his fell beneath them.

He again brought the paper to sign—she took it up, and deliberately tore it to atoms. The priest's features were inflamed with rage—he seemed on the point of bursting out into a fearful explosion, but restrained himself. He felt the need of caution, lest the victim should elude his grasp.

"Be calm, Dora," he said gently, "it is only your good I seek; let the coming month be a time of seclusion and prayer—for that purpose the Holy Church will grant it to you. Remember it is to her will, not to mine, that I wish you to submit—that tender mother against whom you have so fearfully rebelled, but who still opens to you her arms in love and forgiveness. The month is given to you, and then"——

"And then," interrupted Dora, "I will fulfil all that I have promised; but beware, Father, what you demand."

"I shall demand nothing but what the Holy Church requires for your eternal good," said the priest, as he retired.

It was now the middle of February—a week passed, and no tidings. As day after day wore on, the tension of Dora's mind became more dreadful, till she felt that any certainty would be a relief. A fortnight had gone, and another, but not less torturing state of mind succeeded. Dora's belief in the falsehood

of the priest was shaken, and the thought, if it were so, that she had degraded herself by a second appeal to one who wished to sever the bond that united them, tortured her soul; at other times the conviction of Father Adrien's perfidy returned with full power, and her mind was assailed with horrible bodings of Sir Eustace's fate.

The month was slowly waning. Day by day arose in suspense and fear mingled with a gleaming and fitful hope, and, as it closed, beheld that hope extinguished, and a deeper gloom overshadow her path. Two days before the close of the month, she suddenly started from a fearful dream, in which she had seen Sir Eustace extended on the ground in a dark forest. He was pale and senseless, and blood flowed from a wound in his side. She stooped to bind it up, exclaiming, "You were to have been my guardian, but you have deserted me!" He opened his eyes; and, as he turned them upon her, she saw the look of faithful affection she knew so well. She at once became convinced she had been deceived by Father Adrien, but now they were united beyond the power of his efforts to separate. As she rejoiced in this thought, the scene changed—she suddenly awoke, her heart still vibrating with the delightful consciousness of his presence, but soon the delicious dream was checked by the thought of his danger. She had seen him pale, senseless, bleeding, as it were, to death. Was this true? and the rest but a bright vision mocking the fearful truth?

All day her mind continued to vibrate between the extremes of agony and hope. Late in the evening she went to her favorite haunt on the sea-beach. It was a calm, clear evening; the sun had set, and the moon was rising tranquilly over the water. But one day now remained between her and that which was to decide her fate. As she gazed into the blue depths of the sky, she longed for a spirit-glance to read beyond the visible. She gazed—she listened, entranced—till her soul was wrapt in the ideal, and the world around her was forgotten.

"*Eustace!*" she cried, "art thou indeed gone hence? is thy

spirit near me now? Oh, if it be so, appear, reply, end this torturing suspense; let me know that thou art gone! or are thy thoughts this moment with her who so needs thy succor? Oh, this fearful uncertainty!—worse than death!"

She thought of the morrow—the last day of hope that remained to her; and, at the remembrance of what would then be the fate to which she had promised to abandon herself, she shuddered. Death would have been welcome, or the convent an undreaded asylum—but the wife of another!—no, that could never be!

She was walking along the brow of the rocks; the deep waters beneath sullenly laved their sides. She stopped, and bending over the edge, gazed down into them, till dark thoughts filled her mind, and she felt she would rather seek a refuge in their depths than be the wife of Lord Belmont.

The next day came—passed—and brought no tidings. Late at night the priest entered her room.

"The time is now expired, my daughter, which you required, and the Church in tender love granted, as a time of probation for the indulgence of your earthly affections. You see now how unjust were your suspicions of one who regards you with a parent's affection; but it matters not—let your eternal good be secured, and I am content. I have received instructions from those to whom obedience must be rendered, to expedite the arrangements which have been made for the disposal of your person and fortune."

He paused. Dora's eyes were fixed upon him; but she made no reply.

"Do not think me harsh or unfeeling," he continued; "I am but the instrument of our Holy Mother's will. Gladly would I have indulged your wish for delay, and consulted your own choice in your destiny; but this cannot be. Fully aware, as I have been for the past month, that your expectations were baseless, the time has been employed, agreeably to the directions of my *superiors, in* preparing all things necessary for the event

they desire to hasten. And now, Dora, remember you have solemnly devoted yourself to the will of the Church. Are you ready to complete the sacrifice?"

She still gazed, as if she imperfectly understood his words.

"Courage, my daughter!" he said; "your obedience secures your peace on earth, and your happiness hereafter. I am now ready to receive your confession and reconcile you to the Church."

The conflict of that day had been fearful, but it was over now, and a calm despair had settled in her soul. A fearful thought had taken possession of her—that some evil had befallen Sir Eustace, and that this vengeance had come upon him because of her rebellion.

She knelt, and in a low tone repeated her confession. The absolution was pronounced, the benediction given, and there was silence.

"Dora," said the priest at length, "blessed of Heaven! hear now its will—at daybreak to-morrow you are to be united by the holy sacrament of marriage to Lord Belmont."

Dora started, and a visible shudder ran through her frame, but she merely bowed her head in silent assent; and, again bestowing a benediction on her obedience, the priest left the room.

She passed nearly the whole of the night before a crucifix in her room. She prayed for Sir Eustace, and almost felt as if the mighty sacrifice she had just made gave her a claim to ask that its benefits might be his. The hope and joy of life were dead, while life yet remained. All was over now, and light had closed for her, while her sun was in its meridian; but, like a star shining in the gloom, arose the spirit of self-sacrifice, high and pure, though mistaken; and the thought that she suffered for his good, sustained her soul in that hour of darkness and despair.

CHAPTER XXI.

"The beam of day which pierces through
The gloom in which I dwell,
Only discloses to my view
The horrors of my cell."

NEWTON.

"One only thought—one lingering beam—
Now broke across his dizzy dream
Of pain and weariness—'twas she!"

LALLA ROOKH.

A DARK and cloudy evening lowered over the forests of Normandy. In one of the most extensive, a solitary traveller was pursuing his way. He had sent forward his servants and luggage with a design of exploring the scenery, but had lost his way in penetrating into the recesses of the forest, and nightfall unawares stole upon him before he could regain it. He tried various tracks, but each one seemed to conduct him deeper into the wood. At last he found one more beaten, and, after following its winding to a considerable distance, found himself in an open glade in which was a small keep or tower. He knocked loudly at the gate, anxious to find some one to guide him through this wilderness. For some time no answer was returned. At last he heard a voice, the tones of which cast over him a dream-like spell, say—

"Whoever you are, pursue your way; this is no place of refreshment."

"I have lost my way," he replied; "for mercy's sake direct

me through the wood, or give me shelter for the night!—I must perish otherwise by the wolves."

"Holy Mary! shure it's a spirit, and not himself!" exclaimed, in all the richness of her native brogue, the voice of nurse O'Sullivan. Looking in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, Sir Eustace saw the venerable face of the old woman, at a cross-barred window, a considerable height from the ground.

"It's himself in rale arnest! Sir Eustace, agrah! make the best of yer way from this, for it's in great danger ye are; but I must spake wid ye first, and shure it's the blissed saints have sint ye here more by token. Id was my bades I was tellin' whin I heard yer voice."

"Gracious powers!" exclaimed Sir Eustace; "can it be possible? where is Miss Mowbray?"

"Musha, thin, an' she's where she had bether not be," said nurse; "for id's wid her oun friends she is; an' much need she has of some one that will care for her."

"Is she in danger?" inquired Sir Eustace, in a tone of agony. "For pity's sake, nurse, come down to me here!"

"Is id come down to yees, an' me widin four walls, wid a great boult on the door, to say nothin' of the big bars in the windows, Sir Eustace dear? Id's glad an' thankful I'd be if me limbs could follow me will as they used to do—but listen to me—thin go, make the best of yer way through the wood, an' the holy saints be yer guard, for the wolves are bether nor thim ye'd fall in wid here. Ye must know, thin, acushla—(an' isn't the ould heart iv me warm to see him agin?)—ye must know," she continued, lowering her voice to a cautious whisper, "that afther ye had lift Ireland, an' me Lady Fitzgerald, an' Miss, an' all was gone, that me lady took very sick; an' whin she was lyin' ill, didn't I hear wid me oun ears that black-hearted woman, Mrs. Harris, propose to the priest to be afther poisonin' her, an, all to get her out iv the way! I up an' tould her—oh, make haste home, Sir Eustace, for id's in danger me child's *life is!—an' they* had heard me tellin' her that same; shure

'twas the devil carried it to them, or how else could they hear it?—an' they laid me up in the east tower at Carlington. I was born an' brought up in the Castle, but they carried me through passages, an' up an' down stairs, that I niver known—the entrance is from the praste's room; I was there widout any body's knowledge, an' ignorant whether me blissed child was alive or dead, till one night they carried me down to the shore, they gagged me, an' put a cloak over me head entirely; but shure I heard the voice of me oun boy Lanty, givin chase afther the murthering villains—the saints forgive me, for I'm spakin' sin!—but I belave they wint away undher ground (for sure they have dealin's wid the Evil One), an' they came out at the sea, an' I was put into a boat, an' taken, as I guessed, on board a larger one. Whin the cloak was taken aff me head, I saw some strange-lookin' men round me; and who do you think was among them but the furrin Count that was at Carlington last year?"

Sir Eustace started.

"We landed in France, and stoppin' the first night in a small inn, I heard them spakin' (for the walls were thin). I larned by what they said that me lady was safe, but that they were goin' to marry her aginst her will to me Lord Belmont. 'She'll not bend to that while Sir Eustace lives,' said one. 'There are means to compel her,' said the voice of the Count. And oh! Sir Eustace dear, I found that he was a praste as well as the rest, an' I'm thinkin' he's above them all, for he'd a very commandin' way wid him, an' he called himself the Count just to desave—but whisht! I hear somethin' comin'."

Ere Sir Eustace could turn, to meet the impending danger, he received a blow from behind, which laid him senseless on the ground. He knew not what length of time had elapsed before he returned to consciousness: when he did so, he found himself lying in a small room, the window of which was grated, and high in the wall. There was no furniture in it, but an old decayed bedstead; and on attempting to move, he found that

his arms were bound. From the position of the moon in the heavens, he judged it to be about four in the morning. With some difficulty he succeeded in slackening the cord so as to permit him to move, when he drew himself across the floor to a spot where he heard a confused murmur of voices arise, as if from beneath.

He enlarged with his finger a small opening until he was able to see, beneath the room in which he was confined, a chapel where about a dozen monks were performing the morning service. At the altar, in the dress of the officiating priest, he recognized the Conte di Romilli. He watched till the service was concluded; and the brethren dispersed, leaving only a venerable looking monk, yet of most repulsive aspect, who joined his superior at the altar. They moved forward till they stood nearly under the spot from whence Sir Eustace was observing them, and he could hear every word they uttered.

"What do you mean to do with him?" said the Inferior; "to imprison, or—he would be safer out of the way at once, would he not?"

"No," said the Count; "I have no relish for unnecessary murder—he may be kept very safely here; but his falling into our hands at this crisis was most opportune. I received tidings from Brother Adrien this morning, informing me of the success of his work. She has stipulated for a month's delay. Should no letter arrive (and Sir Eustace is safe enough now), she has promised at the end of that month to yield herself entirely to the will of the Church. She will then be hurried into a marriage with Lord Belmont; this once accomplished, his immense interest will be all under the direction of Father Adrien, and a great part of his property secured to the service of the Church. A chapel built, and a convent endowed on his estate—all these stipulations Brother Adrien made," continued the Count, with a sneer, "before he would, as he phrased it, take a vestal from the altar, and suffer her to turn again to the world."

"And for your other plans also it is fortunate," said his companion.

"Especially so," rejoined Romilli. "Do you not know that, in the event of Sir Eustace's death, of which it will not be difficult to spread a report, the whole of the Fitzgerald estates, as well as her private fortune, will become the property of Miss Fitzgerald? I will then re-appear in Ireland in the character I have already borne there, and carry off the heiress and her fortune at once."

"Bravo! most holy priest!" replied the other; "success attend renouncing the world, self-denial, and mortification!"

As the inferior priest uttered these words, they passed out of the chapel, still conversing, but Sir Eustace was unable to distinguish anything further. The dark vista of danger and distress for all he loved best on earth, which this conversation had opened before him, filled him with agony mingled with indignation against these ruthless destroyers. Measures prompt and decisive must be taken, or all would be lost; and here he was —a captive, when most required to act.

"But it shall not be so," he murmured; "Heaven will aid me, and I shall be free!" He succeeded in undoing the ropes which confined his hands, and then freed his limbs. Calmly and deliberately he examined the chances of escape: the window was high, but when, with some difficulty, he had swung himself to a level with it, he found that it was cross-barred, with iron stanchions deeply sunk into the stonework, and that all hope of escape by that direction was utterly vain. He next examined the floor, and at last found a movable plank, close to the hole through which he had observed the conference in the chapel; but when he cautiously raised it, he found that there was no ladder nor other communication—for the remains of stairs which once had been, were too completely broken away, to afford the possibility of a descent. The opening at present seemed to be of no other use than to serve as a post of observation, by means of which those above might see all that was

going on in the chapel. Time, however, was pressing, and no other means of deliverance appeared. At this hour he believed all the brethren of the convent would be in their dormitories; and cautiously, therefore, clinging to the broken fragments of stone which remained, he began the descent. Even these ceased after he had gone a few steps. An immense depth remained below; the projecting fretwork of a pillar afforded the only stepping-stone—he dropped himself upon it, but the crumbling masonry gave way, and he fell with violence upon the floor.

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed a voice near the door, "what is that?" Instead of entering the chapel, the speaker fled to call assistance. Sir Eustace employed the momentary respite in concealing himself from observation. He was severely bruised by his fall, and when he attempted to move, the pain was acute, but he heeded it not, and succeeded in dragging himself cautiously along the floor to the altar, where he found a screen, under its covering of rich tapestry. He had hardly thus concealed himself, when two lay brothers entered the chapel bearing a light.

'Dip your hand in the holy water, brother Pierre," said one; "I doubt not that it was Sathanus himself!"

"Assuredly, brother," replied his companion, "for some time past I have heard fearful sounds, and in the eastern tower, moanings and lamentations, in an unknown tongue; and last night I heard terrible wailings in the air, as if a spirit were flying through it. See, I have watched here for hours, and no mortal foot has entered the chapel; and look here"——they had come upon the fragments of broken stone.

"This may have caused the noise," said Pierre

"No brother," returned his companion, "that is an unbelieving thought; the spirits of the air may indeed have thrown down the stone, but think you the masonry which has remained unbroken for centuries, would fall without agency, when there is *not so* much as a breath of wind stirring to disturb it?"

The good monks knelt at the altar to repeat their aves and paters. As they did so, one of them laid down upon the steps a key which he held in his hand. Sir Eustace gently moved the tapestry—the brethren fled, shrieking that they had seen the Evil One! Aware that they would quickly return with a reinforcement, Sir Eustace hastened to take advantage of their retreat. Seizing the key, with rapid yet stealthy footsteps, he left the chapel, reached a postern door, and applied the key;—it yielded, and he found himself in the open air. Hastily closing and locking the door, he threw the key into a neighboring thicket; and, plunging into the depth of the forest, ascended a chestnut tree, where he was completely screened from observation.

He would at once have pursued his way, and, even without his horse, had little doubt of his being able to elude the search which would be made for him; but he could not think of leaving Nurse O'Sullivan in the power of her ruthless jailers without at least making an effort to save her.

Lights now moved rapidly from window to window of the monastery, for such he perceived the building to be, and he found that a large portion, visible from his present position, had been concealed by the trees when he reached the gate the evening before.

It was well for him that his regard for nurse's safety had detained him in the refuge he had chosen, for a troop of monks issued from the gates, and dispersed in search of the fugitive. Several of them passed and repassed under the branches of the tree in which he was hidden, but they all returned with the air of those who had prosecuted a fruitless search, and the monastery was again quiet.

Towards evening he saw the Conte di Romilli and his companion of the preceding evening, ride from the gates. The latter held before him a bundle closely enveloped in a horseman's cloak. A stifled scream proceeded from it as they passed, in which Sir Eustace recognized the voice of nurse; they stop-

ped and took precautions against any repetition of the sound, and then rode onward.

No sooner were they out of sight, than Sir Eustace slipped from the tree, and, making his way through the brushwood, followed the track they had just taken.

The nature of the ground suffered a foot-passenger to proceed almost as quickly as a horse, and it was not long before he overtook them. Sir Eustace was a man of great personal strength, but he was unarmed, save with a stick he had picked up in the wood, and his left arm nearly disabled by his fall. The Conte di Romilli was also a man of great muscular power, his attendant no less so, and both were completely armed; but these considerations weighed not a moment in Sir Eustace's mind—they did not even present themselves; fear was a stranger to his breast, and besides, every muscle was nerved to rescue the helpless victim from these relentless men.

Making a short circuit which enabled him to intercept their path, he suddenly started from the shade in front of the Count's horse—the animal reared.

"Halt!" exclaimed Sir Eustace in a voice of thunder, seizing the bridle; and with one well-aimed blow of his heavy cudgel he levelled the Count to the earth, before he had time to draw his pistol. His companion fired, and the contents were lodged in Sir Eustace's side; but without a moment's pause he directed a blow at the villain's sword-arm, before he could repeat the assault, and, hastily snatching the burden from his now powerless grasp, sprung on the Count's horse, and, with all the speed he could command, urged the animal through the brushwood. Another pistol-shot grazed its flanks, but they had now gained a more frequented path, and advanced with a rapidity which soon distanced their pursuers.

It was late in the evening when they reached a resting-place for the night. Sir Eustace gave information to the proper authorities, of the den of iniquity from which he had escaped; but *they seemed* either afraid or unwilling to pay much attention to

his intelligence. At the earnest entreaties of nurse, he then submitted his wound to her inspection.

"Ochone!" she exclaimed, "an' ye've been travellin' this blessed day, wid yer best blood drainin' all the time; shure I gev' meself up for lost whin they carried me away, an' me heart jumpid whin I heard the sound iv yer voice; but little did I think what ye were sufferin' for the poor ould crathur."

Nurse, as she bound up his wounds with all her skill, which was considerable, implored him to stop and take a few hours' rest.

"Id's not that I'm wishin' to keep ye back, Sir Eustace dear," she said; "for shure life an' death's in yer speed, but ye'll break down an the way—so you will, agrah! an' that 'ud be worse than all."

Sir Eustace assured her that he was quite ready for the journey; and without loss of time proceeded to Havre, where they found a vessel ready to sail for Ireland, and embarked immediately.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Wherefore do I pause?
I feel the impulse, yet I do not plunge;
I see the peril, yet do not recede.
There is a power upon me which withholds,
And makes it my fatality."

MANFRED.

It was a calm clear night, and the bright moonlight of France was shining over hill and valley; but its beams hardly penetrated a deep glade in Normandy where two persons stood engaged in conversation. One was a tall dark man, enveloped in a riding cloak, and the fair girlish form and simple dress of his

companion seemed hardly suited to a scene so wild, and a companion so stern and mysterious.

"You are come at last," he said; "I have been waiting for you more than an hour."

"I could not help it," she answered timidly; "and I was unable to leave the house till my mother had gone to her room. Oh, Romilli! this deceit is breaking my heart; every look of my kind mother kills me, and to-night she was so affectionate and confiding! Why will you not suffer me to tell her the truth? I am sure she would forgive me."

"She will soon know it," replied the Count; "but now listen to me, Cecilia; you must be prepared for an important step which it is necessary you should take."

She almost shrieked as she exclaimed, "Not to leave my mother; oh, not to leave her!"

"Are you unwilling, then, to go with your husband?" he inquired, in a tone which meant to be tender, but the harshness of which was felt by Cecilia, though she did not reflect upon it.

"No, not unwilling," she replied; "I would follow you over the world, but oh! let me first receive my mother's blessing; I feel as if it were an unholy path upon which I enter, if I cannot ask it."

"Nonsense!" he said, impatiently; then, checking himself, he added, in a milder tone, "They will separate you from me, Cecilia, if you tell them."

"They cannot," she replied quickly; "I am your wife."

"But they will disannul the marriage on the score of your being under age."

"They would not make me miserable," she replied.

"Hush!" he exclaimed, again giving way to the impatience he had half restrained. "You are my wife, and I desire you to meet me to-morrow, at this time and place, ready to accompany me to Italy."

His tone had aroused the latent energy of Cecilia's gentle

nature ; and, drawing back as she spoke, she said, "I will not, without my mother's knowledge."

"Will you not?" he said, grasping her rudely ; "by all the powers, you shall!" "Ah!" he exclaimed again, "this arm!" His right arm dropped powerless by his side.

"What is the matter?" asked Cecilia, quickly; "are you hurt?"

"Yes," he exclaimed, dropping his cloak from the right shoulder, and showing a bloody bandage which covered it. "Yes, I am wounded, and suffering—perhaps in danger ; yet you would desert me, and leave me to die alone!"

"Alas, alas!" exclaimed the unfortunate girl ; "must I forsake my mother, or leave my husband in danger and distress! How did you receive that wound?"

"For your sake I ventured hither, and in passing through the forest a bandit attacked and robbed me. If you forsake me, I care not though my mangled body be left a prey to wild beasts in these gloomy forests."

"Holy Mary, help me!" exclaimed Cecilia. She was silent for a few moments, and then, by a mighty effort, suppressing the agony of her heart, said, "Be it so, then. My right and my duty are to be with my husband. Oh, my mother! may the God of heaven and earth care for thee!"

"My noble wife!" exclaimed the Count. "I knew that thus it would be. You could not forsake one who would sacrifice his life for you! It is my hard necessity to be obliged to inflict pain upon one whom I would gladly guard from every pang ; but it is a present pain only. Once safely with me in Italy, you shall write to Lady Fitzgerald, and tell her all. She will accord forgiveness for the rash act that was mine, not yours ; for I could not brave the danger of losing you ; and think of the happiness that will be ours when she comes to visit us in our sunny home!"

Cecilia listened while he drew bright pictures of the future, and described his *palázzo* near Naples, with its flower-gardens

and orange-groves; but even while he spoke, she almost unconsciously withdrew from his embrace, though she continued to stand near him; there was something in that bosom, the abyss of so many crimes, from which her pure nature shrunk, though she knew not why.

"Let me go now," said she, at last. "I need quiet to prepare for this fearful step; and see, the morning is breaking."

"Go, then, Cecilia. The blessing of the saints be around you! You have promised to come here at midnight, or rather one hour after midnight, on the morrow; and meanwhile you will be silent and secret."

"I will," said Cecilia; "and now, farewell! If I sin in thus deceiving my best and tenderest friend, the guilt be on your head."

"So be it," he replied. "The errors of your pure spirit will weigh lightly on mine. Farewell!"

She hastened along the mountain path, till the *château*, overhanging a foaming torrent, with its background of dark trees, came in view. All was still. The only sound that broke the silence was the rushing of the waters, and the twittering, amongst the branches, of awakening birds. The dew lay heavy on the grass, and the first beams of the rising sun glittered in their liquid prisms, and seemed to strew the earth with diamonds.

Cecilia did not enter the *château*. She was accustomed to be out at early hours; so her absence would create no suspicion. She wandered up the hill to the top of the cascade, and sat down there by the clear pool from which the torrent fell, under the shade of a dark chestnut tree. Beneath her far down lay a little valley embosomed in hills; a clear lake in its centre lay sparkling in the sunlight, and pale wreaths of blue smoke rose slowly from the cottages scattered along its banks.

Some chord of association was touched by the quiet scene, that carried her back to Ballyrowan. "My home, my home!" *she exclaimed*, bursting into an agony of tears; "would that I

had never left you! O happy scenes of my early life, I shall never see you more!—never tread your green woods or listen to the murmur of your wild blue waters! O for one hour of forgetfulness, one draught of that pure fresh gladness that I shall never know again!"

She wept long in agony of spirit. The burst of emotion relieved her, and she could think calmly at last of her prospects and position.

She had promised, and it must be. She was his wife. Was it not her happiness as well as duty to follow her husband over the world?—She paused. Why did her heart not answer as it should have done? A few months before, she would have felt that to be with him any where was happiness. She would have received his word almost as inspiration, and have thought that in obeying him she could not err; but the days of implicit faith were over, yet she knew not why. She had had several interviews with the Count since they came to Normandy, and at each succeeding one she parted from him with a more painful though undefined feeling of distrust. Perhaps the atmosphere of guilt that surrounded him was oppressive to her spirit, or there was a latent consciousness that she could not see into the depths of that dark heart;—and she trembled to trust herself to the unknown.

And now the world was before her to tread—but with whom! Dark and devious its paths stretched into futurity, and she feared to leave the quiet shelter of her youth's home, and go forth a wanderer into unknown regions, with no bosom to rest on but that unfathomed one—no arm to protect her but his. Was not his enough? Faith and love strove to raise their heads, and she answered that it was.

It was night. Lady Fitzgerald had bowed before the throne of mercy, and sought for her child the protecting care of the Father of heaven; and she had prayed that the light of His truth might be given to that erring but beloved one over whom her soul yearned with a love too mighty to find other channel

than in prayer. The mother's heart was soothed by this sweet communion. She lay down to rest, and after a while slept more tranquilly than she had done for long. It had been finally arranged that they should set out immediately for Ballyrowan; and hope filled her heart that there, in the society of Dora, and amongst the familiar happiness of her home, her prayers would be answered, and health and peace be restored to her child.

She had not slept long when a pale form stood by her bed. On the threshhold of the home she was about to leave for ever, the lonely girl had turned. She must gaze once more upon that face so loved. She must kiss that pale calm brow, and pray for a blessing to descend upon her that would comfort her for the loss of her ungrateful child. She threw aside the mantle that enwrapped her, and in her simple evening dress, which she had not changed since the night before, went to her mother's room. She softly entered; all was still—a lamp burned upon the table. She cautiously approached the bed. That sweet face wore an expression of calm repose—so pale, so still, that it might have been chiselled from the purest marble, save for the dark braided hair that shaded the noble brow. Cecilia bent over her and gently touched it with her lips. Soft as was the touch, it broke the light rest of the sleeper. She opened her eyes, and their tender yet searching light penetrated her daughter's soul.

"My own Cecilia! Why are you here? is anything distressing you? are you well?"

"Quite well, dear mother; but I could not sleep. I only came to look at and kiss you. I did not mean to disturb you."

"You do not disturb me, dearest; sit by me, and we shall talk together until you feel inclined to rest."

"No; I would rather be alone now; but oh! bless me before I go."

"The blessing of our Father above be with you, my darling!" said Lady Fitzgerald, pressing her to her heart; "but you are troubled. What has grieved you? Let me share all *that distresses* you."

"Ask me not, dearest mother, to speak to-night. You will soon know all that grieves me."

"Turn, then, to happier thoughts," said Lady Fitzgerald. "Think of our sweet home, which we shall see again so soon, and Dora—do you not long to be with her?"

"Yes, my very soul longs to see Dora and sweet Ballyrowan once more. She will be often with you there."

"Yes, she will be much with us. She has two homes, you know, and we will be constantly together."

"We shall all be happy together, my darling," said Lady Fitzgerald tenderly, for she thought she could trace an allusion to Cecilia's own unhappy love, and was anxious to turn her thoughts from dwelling upon it. "We shall all be together, and, with returning health, our own Ireland and its loving people will bring back to you the happiness they used to give."

"Yes, yes, my bright home will make me happy," said Cecilia hurriedly, and with a wildness that alarmed Lady Fitzgerald. "But now, farewell—good night. The blessing of Heaven be yours, my mother!"

She clasped her arms round her neck, pressed her convulsively to her bosom, and imprinted upon her cheek a long fervent kiss, then left the room.

The sound of her mother's closing door seemed to Cecilia the knell of hope and peace. She paused ere she withdrew her hand, and a strong agony of conflict for a few moments tore her soul; but the spell that bound her was yet too strong, and, turning away, she hastened to the garden, and traversing its paths, opened the gate that led to the forest. Here again she paused. All around was slumbering in the tranquil beauty of the early morning. The still boughs of the trees, green hills, and dewy flowers again brought over her soul a gale of home memories. She clasped her hands in wild despair, when the voice whose spell ruled her soul seemed to sound in her ear, and the eye that had fascinated, to bear upon her again. She stood awed and silent; then, exclaiming, "False to all have I

become! No—it must, it shall be so!" took one farewell gaze at the home she had left, and rushed into the wood.

The sun had not risen when Cecilia left the *chateau*, and the chill morning air pierced her enfeebled frame as she threaded her way through tangled underwood. Heavy with dew, she drew her cloak closer around her, and pressed on her way to the appointed place of rendezvous. It was the open glade where she had met the Count on the preceding evening. The ground here abruptly sunk into a deep hollow, and the thickly-matted boughs of the trees, meeting over head, excluded every ray of sunshine even at noon, but at this early hour it was still wrapped in the darkness of night. Cecilia hastened on, expecting to find the Count already awaiting her; and mingled as were the feelings he inspired, at this moment the desolate girl turned to him as the only protector she now could claim on earth.

She reached the glade at last, but all there was buried in a dreary and profound silence.

No human voice was heard, and from the heavy dew that lay undisturbed on the grass, and fell in showers from the branches as she passed, it was evident that no human foot had that morning trodden its solitude. She waited long, but no one appeared. Worn out in body and mind, an undefined terror took possession of her. Tales of her country's superstition, that had never ruffled the peace of her happy childhood, returned to her mind. She dared not turn to her forsaken home, and yet he for whom she had left it came not to claim her. More from habit than feeling, she uttered a half conscious prayer for protection, but the words seemed to fall chilly back on her heart. A sense of guilt weighed down her spirit, and she felt as if, in forsaking the hallowed shelter of her home, she had turned from the gates of heaven. A wild terror, not alien to her gentle nature, but which she had ever been too closely sheltered to feel, took possession of her. She called aloud for help, and the woods echoed to the name of Romilli, but the terror-stricken tones of

her own voice alone replied. She tried to flee, but her trembling limbs failed to support her, and she sank down insensible.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Straight satisfy yourself
If she be in her chamber"

OTHELLO.

A FEW hours after Cecilia had left her, Lady Fitzgerald started from a broken slumber, with the impression that she heard her calling for help. The remembrance of her agitation, the touch of her cold lips, the anguish of her countenance, all at the same moment rushed upon her recollection; and, hastily rising, while an agony of terror filled her heart, she went to Cecilia's room. She was not there, and she saw that the bed had not been occupied. The fearful truth burst too quickly upon her mind. Her child had left her to fly to the ruin which alone could await her as the bride of that evil man. But the present was no moment to indulge a useless grief. Hastily summoning her domestics, she despatched them in different directions to endeavor to trace the fugitives, while, thinking it possible that to elude pursuit they might have lingered in the forest, she herself set out to explore its recesses.

Dreary and horror-stricken was her heart as she pressed through the tangled thickets of the wood. Hours passed, while in deep silence she pursued her way, breathing, as she went, agonized prayers for the safety of her child. When hope had almost forsaken her, she caught the gleam of a white dress amongst the brushwood, and hastened forward. It was her child; but as she bent over her and raised her in her arms,

she feared that life had already departed. An expression of terror and anguish was imprinted on the lovely features, but they were rigid, and of an ashy paleness. Her eyes were closed, and her long hair heavy with dew. Her drenched clothes clung around her cold limbs. There was no warmth, no cordial near to revive her; so gently raising her, without loss of time, Lady Fitzgerald bade one of the attendants wrap her in a warm cloak and bear her in his arms to the *château*. When her wet clothes were taken off, Lady Fitzgerald felt a faint warmth about the region of the heart, and after restoratives had been used for some time, a deep sigh at last gave token of returning life. Cecilia opened her eyes and fixed them on her mother, but there was a wild bewilderment in their gaze. She looked round the room, as if expecting to see some one who did not appear; then clasping Lady Fitzgerald closely to her heart, exclaimed, "O do not leave me; he will drag me away!"

"What do you mean, my child?" said her mother; "whom do you dread?"

Cecilia did not answer. She had relapsed into insensibility, from which she only revived to the tortures of brain fever.

For many days the wretched mother hung over her, hardly expecting, as each sun declined, that it would rise again upon her living child. She had lain for some time in a stupor, without giving any other sign of life than her feeble pulse and heavy breathing afforded. Her mother was sitting by her side when she suddenly awoke, and looking wildly round the room, exclaimed, "I know it! I know it! my soul is bound by the chain. I cannot break it. Whither are you dragging me, Romilli?" She paused. The sound of that name, though pronounced by her own lips, seemed to exercise its wonted spell, and she added in a softer tone, "With thee, Romilli; oh! protect me—but my mother, my mother!" She relapsed into wild raving, that filled her mother's heart with an undefined but agonized dread. At last she sunk again into stupor. Hour after *hour passed,* while Lady Fitzgerald watched the conflict between

life and death. It was near midnight when the physician softly entered the room. He drew back the curtain, examined the pale face of the exhausted sleeper, and felt her pulse.

"The crisis is at hand," he said, turning to Lady Fitzgerald. "If this continue, all may be well, but let nothing disturb her. Life hangs on this sleep."

He left the room. All was silent around, except the crumbling of the wood fire on the hearth, or the low sighing of the wind as it swept up the long avenue of *tilleuls* that led to the *chateau*. No sound broke the stillness of night. Lady Fitzgerald pressed her hands upon her bosom, as if to still even the throbbings of her heart, lest they should break that deathlike repose. Looking unto Him alone who has borne a part in every human sorrow, could she bear the awful suspense of that hour. Her lips did not move, her heart framed no definite supplication, but the depths of her soul held communion with God, and His Spirit breathed peace and trust into that inner sanctuary.

Cecilia moved. The mother's anxious gaze was instantly turned upon her countenance, but she did not awake. The motion, however, had disturbed part of her dress. A blue ribbon slipped from her bosom, and a plain gold ring attached to it fell close to her mother's hand. The fatal truth was revealed. The fate from which she deemed her child was snatched was already sealed—Cecilia was the wife of Romilli!

Ere the first shock of this fresh and dreadful blow was over, Cecilia awoke. Her gaze was calm and tranquil, and as it turned with a look of fond recognition upon her mother, Lady Fitzgerald forgot all but that her child was restored to life. She was recalled to other thoughts by Cecilia putting her hand to her neck as if searching for something; and finding the ribbon, she calmly replaced it in her bosom. Turning to her mother, she said—"Come near me, my mother; I have sins to confess to God and to you. You will forgive me, and pray with me for His pardon, and then perhaps the weary guilty soul of your child may depart in peace."

There was a solemn calm in her voice that startled Lady Fitzgerald. She would have drawn near and supported her head, but Cecilia took her hand, and, arresting the movement, continued in the same tone—"Nay, my mother, take me not now to your heart, as in happy days gone past. First let my peace be made with God and you, and then, when prayers and penitence have washed my guilt away, perhaps my earthly rest may be opened to me once more."

"No guilt can ever bar you from your mother's heart, my child," said Lady Fitzgerald, while she gently raised Cecilia's head, and fondly kissed her cheek; "and free and open is the way of your return to your God, but not by penitence or prayer. The blood of Jesus, and that alone, has opened a door which no man can shut."

Cecilia pressed her hand upon her forehead, as if trying to arrange her thoughts.

"I have been very near eternity," she said at last. "Sometimes, when you thought I slept, I have been pondering on that awful future, till all that has rent my soul for so many months appeared as nothing, and everything sunk into insignificance but the hope of eternal salvation; yet where to find it I know not. Like a long-forgotten dream of peace, your words have come over my spirit, but I dare not rest on that hope alone. They told me I must not."

Her look became disturbed, and Lady Fitzgerald saw she had spoken as long as her strength would permit.

"Do not think more just now, my child," she said soothingly; "only remember that the word of the Saviour *must* be true, and He has said, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved.' Now try to sleep, and we will talk more when you awake." Cecilia seemed inclined to prolong the conversation, but a drowsy languor overcame her anxiety, and still closely pressing the hand she held, she fell into a calm slumber. The early dawn was stealing into the room ere she awoke. She appeared much revived, and anxious to resume her conversation with her mother. Lady Fitz-

gerald would not suffer her to speak until she had taken some refreshment. She then again took her place by her side, and gently whispered, "Do not agitate yourself, my child, by telling what is already known to me."

Cecilia seemed surprised, and half raised her head with an inquiring look.

"Your wanderings during illness, and the sight of one token I could not mistake, have already told your tale; but fear not, my child, it is known to me alone."

"I have deceived you," said Cecilia eagerly. "Oh how I have suffered! but that will soon be over now. Can you forgive me?"

"I forgive you, my darling, fully and freely, as I hope to be forgiven," said Lady Fitzgerald. "Rest, then, in my love, and let us together seek Him who pardons with even more than a mother's tenderness."

"Ah! I know not what has been sin against God, and what obedience to His law," said Cecilia, abstractedly. "His Church declares his will; but you, my best and kindest mother, I deceived you, yet I meant it not. I knew not, when I left you on that fatal morning, that ere I was clasped again to your heart, an invisible chain would be around me, of power at any moment to draw me from that sanctuary."

She became strongly agitated as she spoke; and Lady Fitzgerald, who saw that no balm could be poured into the wounds of her soul until they were fully disclosed, gently drew from her every particular of her sad tale.

When she related the history of her almost forced marriage, Lady Fitzgerald saw how much less to blame than she had supposed her unfortunate child really was. When she told of her leaving home, as she believed for ever—when she described the agony of that parting conflict, and her lonely desolation in the forest, the mother's heart alternately quivered with agony, and blessed God, as she held her rescued treasure closely to her breast, who had thrown over her the shield of His protection,

and saved her from the fearful snares that were spread for her feet.

Deceived by the terror, which at different parts of her narrative Cecilia had shown, of the fatal power that enchained her, her mother half betrayed the idea—which had brought comfort unspeakable to herself—that a marriage thus forced with a person under age might be annulled by the English law. She saw at once, in the reaction of Cecilia's feelings, how strong were the chains, not of fear only, but affection, that bound her to that mysterious man.

"Fear not, my Cecilia," she said soothingly, while her own heart was wrung; "no one will act in this matter except by your own desire. You are the wife of Count Romilli, and your own choice alone must determine whether you abide by the vow you have made, or seek to disannul it."

"Alas!" said Cecilia, "the choice may not now be in my power. He was wounded when we last met—ere now he may have found an unknown grave in the depths of the forest!"

"Nay, why should you fear this?" said Lady Fitzgerald, gently; for Cecilia had become so violently agitated, that all her mother's efforts were directed to soothe her. "The Count was nearly well when you saw him; he has no doubt written, but you know how uncertain the carriage of letters is in this place—his has probably been lost. On your recovery, Eustace will take any steps you wish to discover him. Meanwhile, rest, my darling, and try to commit, to One more tender than any human friend, the care both of your earthly happiness and your soul's salvation."

"Speak not to me of Eustace, mamma—my kind and tender brother—he could but hate and despise me now. I have grieved all who love me best, and now I only wish to live because I do not know if God will save me, and I fear to appear before Him!" She lay for a long time silent, then slowly said, "If Count Romilli lives, and you and Eustace forgive me, I *might yet* be happy."

"God has much happiness yet in store for you, I trust, my child," said Lady Fitzgerald, as an unchecked tear fell on the wasted hand she held; "and if my forgiveness or your brother's can secure it, that is indeed already yours."

Cecilia raised herself in bed; an April beam, for it was not a smile, flitted across her wan face, and she threw her arms round her mother's neck.

"Oh, if it should be so!" she exclaimed. "But do not lose time, mother; try to hear quickly of him."

"I will, I will, my child; sleep peacefully now, and trust me." Resting on her mother's arm, Cecilia gradually sunk into a deep repose.

Lady Fitzgerald had little doubt that, could Cecilia's consent be obtained, the English laws would annul a marriage so forced and illegal; but she foresaw considerable difficulty in persuading her daughter to acquiesce; and even should she succeed, a tedious law process must be undergone before Cecilia would be free. All the agitation it would involve, her poor shattered frame was utterly unable to sustain; and meanwhile, until Sir Eustace could join them, they were alone and unprotected in a foreign land, and exposed to the treacherous enemy, who at any time might snatch her unfortunate child from her arms.

Truly there was much need to trust in his defence who careth for the widow and the orphan. She prayed for aid and protection till her soul was calmed and elevated by the assurance of God's faithful love; then wrote to Sir Eustace a letter which would at once call him back, yet could not do harm if it fell into other hands, and addressed it to Rome, where she believed he still was.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"To sign and seal, to do and die."
BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR.

WELL knowing that no letter would arrive from Sir Eustace, and that the unhappy girl's last chance of rescue was over, on the evening preceding the day which the priest had appointed for Dora's marriage, Lord Belmont arrived at the Castle. Late at night he sat with the priest in his private room, signing papers and arranging all necessary preliminaries. The priest already had in his possession one which secured his position as chaplain at Glenarven, the sole charge of building a chapel and convent within its grounds, and a large sum of money placed at his disposal for these purposes. When he had signed this paper, Lord Belmont interrupted the proceedings—"Mr. Mowbray," he said, "do not think it implies any distrust of your judgment if I am still unsatisfied regarding Miss Mowbray's feelings. The note from her which you sent me expressed consent to our marriage, it is true, but the terms were cold and constrained; at our last meeting my regard was evidently unreturned, perhaps even unobserved, and hers is not a heart to be easily won. You know that I covet her affection above all earthly things; yet sooner than have any constraint put on her feelings, I would never see her again."

"Do not think, Lord Belmont," replied the priest, "that I would coerce one so dear to me; it is true, as I have openly *told you, that* had Miss Mowbray's choice alone been consulted,

she would rather have devoted her life to works of piety ; but she is a lonely being. Were I removed from her, she has no other protector ; the circumstances I have before hinted to you would render it impossible for her to reside with Lady Fitzgerald, and Miss Beauford is already of advanced age. In the unsettled state of our country, it is of the utmost consequence that she should be under safe guardianship. She esteems you, and ere long you will gain her affection. Had she wished it, she could have put a stop to our proceedings ; but she is aware that I seek only her happiness, and she has freely consented to the means by which I would secure it."

"Would it not at least be well," said Lord Belmont, "for us to have an interview before we meet at the altar ?"

"Under other circumstances, it would," replied the priest ; "but this arrangement has been made by her own desire. Her health is very delicate ; she is unable to encounter any agitation, and anxious to have the trying ceremony of the morrow over."

"Be it so," said Lord Belmont ; "if this step be for her a rash one, at least it shall be the endeavor of my future life to secure her happiness."

The morning rose fair and calm, and the first beams of the rising sun fell around Dora, as she still knelt before the crucifix. All night she had prayed there ; but, as the morning broke, her head sunk down upon the altar, and a short slumber stole over her. Harris entered, and for a moment stood transfixed at the beauty of the form before her. Dora's dark hair was unbound, and fell in masses over her white dress ; her pale features seemed to wear the repose of death, and her breathing was so still, that Harris thought at first she had already passed to a rest denied her on earth, and leant over her to discover if yet she lived ;—she breathed faint and low.

"Angel," murmured Harris, "curse me not !"

At this moment Dora awoke, and met the gaze of her attendant ; a look of dim recollection passed over her face as if she

felt some event impending, but could not at first recall its nature. Too soon it flashed upon her; she clasped her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, exclaimed, "Not my will, but Thine be done!"

She then rose, and quietly submitted herself to Harris. Hardly had she begun her toilet, when Miss Beauford entered.

"Are you nearly ready, my love?" she asked, with a kindness of manner which had for some time been increasing; and now, absorbed as she was in Dora's prospects, even partook of fondness. "Alas! how ill you look; you have not slept, I am sure; how very unfortunate! and that pale lemon-colored dress will make you look unearthly. I told Mr. Mowbray that such a thing was never heard of as hurrying on a marriage in this way, without time to get a *trousseau*. One must not oppose the priest, to be sure; but for the heiress of Carlington to be married in an old gown, the like was never known! and so unlucky, too, every shade of yellow; your black velvet would be no better. The white satin would have been better than this, Harris?"

"It does not fit Miss Mowbray, ma'am; this dress, which is newly made, is the only one that will suit; she has grown so thin lately."

"Never mind, dear aunt," said Dora gently; "if this dress bodes misfortune, it will suit me the better."

"Hush, my dear child," said the old lady, wiping away a tear. "I cannot bear to hear you speak in this way, or to see you look so faded. 'Bode misfortune,' indeed! there was Lord Bouverie's daughter married in yellow, and died within the year; and Miss Cleveland was married in primrose, and ran off with Lord Sydney. Not that I fear any such misfortunes for you; poor child! you might die indeed, but never disgrace your family; but, since it must be so, I daresay all will go well; only things were not managed so when I was young. Young people were allowed to fix their own marriage day, and

many were the cheerful drives about London with their bride-maids, to make choice of their jewels and dresses."

In the midst of the good lady's lucubrations, Dora's toilet was completed, and her aunt was a little mollified when she saw how lovely she looked in her pale lemon-colored silk, covered with a robe of lace, simply clasped at the throat with a pearl brooch. In her hair there was no ornament, but a veil of the same material as her dress was thrown over her, and reached nearly to her feet.

She was just ready when Mr. Mowbray knocked at the door.

Dora heard the summons, and walking calmly and steadily forward, gave him her hand, and was conducted by him to the chapel. It had been hastily adorned with flowers and evergreens; tapers were burning on the altar, and a rich delicate incense breathed around. A priest, who had been summoned from a neighboring parish, stood at the altar. Lord Belmont was there also; no one else was present save the domestics, and a few of the neighboring cottagers, who stood ranged at a little distance. Miss Beauford followed Dora. For a few moments there was a dead silence. The voice of the officiating priest arose in prayer. It ceased. Father Adrien, taking the cold hand of Dora, placed it in that of Lord Belmont. His brother at the altar solemnly demanded whether there was any lawful impediment to this marriage. A moment's silence followed, and the service was about to proceed, when the tramp of horses' feet was heard in the avenue. Dora started, and turned to the door. The sound drew near. The priest endeavored to hurry on the ceremony, when Sir Eustace Fitzgerald, in a travelling dress, covered with dust, rushed into the chapel, followed by nurse O'Sullivan.

"Stop!" he exclaimed in a voice of thunder, which reverberated through the vaulted aisles of the chapel. The book fell from the hands of the astonished priest.

Lord Belmont turned pale, and seemed irresolute how to act, while Father Adrien haughtily demanded by what authority Sir

Eustace presumed to interrupt this holy sacrament. "Retire, I pray you," he continued; "your presence is alike unnecessary and ill-timed—the ceremony is almost completed."

"Is it so, Dora?—speak!" said Sir Eustace. "Have you pronounced these false vows?"

"No!" she exclaimed, "I spoke not."

"Then you are free, and I will defend you with my heart's blood," he said.

"It is false!" said the priest vehemently; "she *is* married. Father Dennis! speak, I charge you."

Father Dennis yielded a hesitating assent, but Lord Belmont stepped forward.

"No," he said, "the vows were unuttered. Let Miss Mowbray speak, I am ready to abide by her decision. Am I mistaken," he continued, turning to Dora, "in supposing that the letter you sent me expressed your real feelings? do you now wish to retract?"

"I never wrote to you," said Dora.

The priest interposed—"Leave this place, Sir Eustace; Miss Mowbray shall decide for herself, but your intrusion here is unauthorized."

"Beware, Mr. Mowbray," said Sir Eustace sternly; "the evidences of your guilt are in my possession, and your best wisdom is to retire without further discussion."

He beckoned to nurse, who had been standing near, but half concealed by a pillar, so that the priest had not seen her. The priest changed color; but strongly mastering himself, strove to retain an appearance of composure.

"She has nothing to charge me with," said he, "but that, at the command of the Church, I detained her in a short captivity, and then sent her abroad."

"Oh, nurse!" exclaimed Dora, embracing the old woman in a transport of joy, "I thought you were dead! I thought you had fallen over the Kerry rocks. How came you here?"

"*I'd niver* foot in the Kerry rocks, darlint," answered nurse;

"but all the time was up in the east tower at Carlington. Sure ye mind, dear, the day I got spache of ye the day ye were sick in yer bed, and how Kathleen cam to warn me they were comin'; an' as I wint through the passage, a door in the wall opened that I niver seen afore, and out came Mrs. Harris, and his rivirence at her back, and they tuk hould iv me; and whin I tried to cry, they clapped their hands an me mouth, and had me away through the saycrit door."

"Stop this insane folly, on pain of excommunication," exclaimed the priest; "you have been dreaming or doting, old woman."

"No, your rivirence, I was doin' neider; and if such are the ways iv thim that's to guide us to heaven, I wonder what way they'd be afther takin' that lade us the other road. Be asy then, alanna, and I'll tell you all by and bye; be asy, all iv yees; ye'll hear the story intirely;—but all I'll be sayin' in the manetime is—Honor and glory to Sir Eustace Fitzgerald, for only for him our young lady would have bin married aginst her will, afther all, and her poor ould nurse 'ud have been pining her life out, childer, in the black forest of Normandy."

"Long life to his honor," shouted Lanty; "and his example was followed by the servants and people, who had only been kept quiet by the intense interest with which they listened, but now made the chapel resound with their acclamations—"Long life to his honor, and good luck to him; and may our lady live long to reign over us."

Some of the people ventured to join Dora's name with Sir Eustace's in their benedictions, but were reproved by the graver ones. "Whist, will ye; sure isn't his lardship here, and it was not him that was decaving her, inyhow?"

Lord Belmont now left the chapel, saying in an under tone, as he passed Sir Eustace, "This matter must be arranged between us, Sir Eustace, at a fitting time and place."

"When and where you please," replied Sir Eustace. "And now, madam," he continued, turning to Miss Beauford, "will

you have the kindness to conduct Miss Mowbray to her room, while I make necessary arrangements with Mr. Mowbray?"

Miss Beauford immediately came forward, and accompanied Dora from the chapel. She had been a silent and petrified spectator of the whole scene, and only found voice when they had fairly reached Dora's *boudoir*—

"Well, this is most wonderful! Who would have thought such things of Father Adrien! not that I think young people should be wilful—I always said that; but to forge letters and deceive you in this manner! Well, if it is to be Sir Eustace, the propinquity can be got over, and a dispensation sent for from his Holiness. But oh, Dora! do not wear that lemon-colored gown. Didn't I say the marriage would be unfortunate if you wore it, and you see I was right? But, to be sure, there will be time now to get a proper *trousseau*."

CHAPTER XXV.

"One God, one law, one element."
TENNYSON.

A CALM and tranquil evening succeeded the stormy day of Dora's interrupted marriage. Miss Beauford—declaring that "such scenes were quite extraordinary, really more like what one read of in the old romances of chivalry than anything else; and that one's nerves required a little time to recover from them"—had retired to her room, and Dora sat with Sir Eustace on the balcony, watching the last rays of the sun as they dipped their light in the waveless sea.

The quiet of the scene and hour entered into her soul, and *soothed to rest* the spirit so long and sorely tossed.

"Look at that sun, Dora," said Sir Eustace, as its crimson rays, spreading over mountain and sea, covered all nature with a halo of glory. "In gloom and tempest it went down when first you promised to be mine, and many a rude billow has severed us since then. Now, see the smile that promises a cloudless sky. Let that sun again witness our vows, and Heaven grant its omen may prove true as the last!"

Dora did not reply. A shadow had crossed her brow. She was silent for a few moments. The shadow passed, and the expression of calm and elevated feeling had returned to her countenance ere she said—

"Do not speak to me of earthly union. Let not your voice tempt me to sin. It is true, we have found one false and treacherous priest, but his perfidy does not taint the purity of the Catholic faith, and it is not by him alone that our marriage has been forbidden;—the Church has interdicted it."

She paused for a moment, and her voice trembled as she continued—"We must part again, but no deceit shall now separate our mutual faith. The union of the soul is higher than any earthly tie, and that is ours."

"Stop, Dora," interrupted Sir Eustace, "you cannot mean that you still adhere to your resolution? The law of God does not sever us!"

"I know not," said Dora; "the Church is the expounder of God's law to us, and yet why should I say so, for I know not if I believe it. My mind is dark and confused, and I will confess to you all the doubts that have perplexed me since we met. Can it be that the great God, whose sun shines upon all, has excluded from the hope of salvation every one who disavows the Catholic faith?—that He whose instructions are written on every page of nature, that His children may learn to know and adore Him, should seal up all saving knowledge in the hands of a section, and that but a small one of the human race?"

"It cannot be, and it is not!" exclaimed Sir Eustace warmly; "free as the light and warmth of the sun over all

creation is the love of the universal Father to the creatures He has made, and even as all are welcome to bask in the sunshine, so may all fearlessly repose in the love of God. His law alone, Dora, we are required to obey; and if the priesthood lay down a code more severe, it is because their own darkness apprehends not the light and liberty of truth."

Dora listened earnestly while Sir Eustace spoke. Light seemed breaking upon her mind, but her brow still wore an air of anxious thought.

"But how can we be sure that we know the will of God?" she said.

"Do you read the Bible, Dora?" inquired Sir Eustace.

"No," she replied; "Father Adrien did not allow me."

"And what right had he to forbid your drinking at the fountain of truth? Is it *his* Bible, that he should shut it from you; and if it be God's, then is it not given to you as well as to him?"

"Yes," said Dora; "but the Church forbids it."

"Throw off, dearest Dora, the shackles of Church-ism; be a member of the universal Church, which has truth as its badge, and the Lord of heaven and earth alone as its ruler."

"I will, Eustace! I will—oh how gladly! for my spirit pants for truth."

"Shall we not seek it together, Dora?"

"Together in spirit; but you would not wish me to take a dubious step—one which I still feel so?"

"No, I would not have urged you thus far, but that I fear to leave you. Danger is still around, and you need protection."

"I shall be quite safe, I think, here," said Dora. "Father Adrien is going, and I believe I am surrounded only by faithful hearts; at least there is but one untrue, and she must leave me. I will employ the time of your absence in seeking to know the truth; and if I find that the law of God sanctions our union, *then, Eustace,* when you return, we may speak of it again."

"So be it," he said; "but I will not leave you here. Let me take you to Dublin. Miss Beauford will accompany you. I will report the discoveries we have made, and place you under protection. It would be impossible to leave you here. Father Adrien would make another attempt to get you into his power; and the secret avenues to the Castle, known to him alone, might render him too successful."

At this moment a servant appeared to say that Mr. Mowbray requested an interview with Miss Mowbray before he left Carlington.

"You will not see him, Dora," said Sir Eustace, quickly. "I will go to Mr. Mowbray, and bring any message he may wish to send."

"No," said Dora quietly, "I will see him. It is right, Eustace; do not fear me."

"Say to Mr. Mowbray," she continued, turning to the servant, "that I will attend him in the library."

When Dora entered the room, she found Father Adrien standing near a window. He turned as she approached, and she was startled by the haggard paleness of his countenance. He spoke, and the hollow tone of his voice thrilled her heart with strangely-mingled sensations.

"Dora," he said, "I have sought this interview, that, before we part, I might clear away the cloud which a testimony I will not asperse has cast upon my name, and enable you to think of me as a desolate being, for whom earth held no resting-place till he found it in a lonely grave; yet as one who, for your sake, endured the sufferings that have made him what he is, and who, while breath remains, will never cease to labor and pray for your salvation."

Dora trembled, but did not speak. He took her hand, and with a gentleness that in him had peculiar power, led her to a seat, and, placing himself near her, continued—

"You blame me for the measures that have crossed your will and sacrificed your affections; but have you never thought that

I am but the agent of that power whose representative you have been called to obey in me?"

Dora started.

"Yes," he added, "your will was not more sacrificed, your affections not more crushed, than mine. Was it a light sorrow, think you, to see the only human being united to me by ties of kindred or of love, the child whose slightest wish my soul yearned to gratify, tortured, and by my own hand? The obligation to act as I have done, Dora, has inflicted a refinement of suffering that I pray Heaven you may never know; but it is thus that the Church prepares her servants for a better world, by crushing every feeling of nature that would rise up against their obedience."

"And was there no power left in your own hands?" inquired Dora. "Was not the choice yours of the vocation I should embrace?"

"No more—nay, less—than it was your own. In mercy to the infirmity of human nature, to the weakness of even her best endeavors, the Church has organized a beautiful system of government, where, by gradations of rank, and brotherhood in office, all are assisted, and all overlooked. Had I in any particular failed in executing the will of my spiritual superiors, I would have been immediately removed, and one more unflinching placed in my room. To save you, therefore, my child, from the power of a stranger, to preserve around you, even in your darkest moments, the shield of my love, was a motive additional to my vow, if the weakness of human tenderness had tempted me, as too surely it did, to break it."

"But were the treachery, the deceit used, in carrying out the commands of the Church, also authorized by her?" inquired Dora, with an unmoved calmness of manner, that betrayed the conflict in her breast. "Are these the weapons of a holy faith?"

"The salvation of her children," replied the priest, "is considered by our Holy Mother of such primary importance, that to

secure it she employs means which to the unlearned and ignorant may seem unlawful; but St. Paul himself warns us to beware of searching into these holy mysteries. The babes of the Church must not be fed with food too strong for them. Let us not, therefore, pursue this conversation. I only wish to make known my resolution, and to bid you farewell.—My office, as priest of this district," he continued, after a short pause, in which he appeared to wait for Dora to speak, "is not mine to resign; as a servant of the Church I must await her commands; as a man, I can no longer remain an inmate of the house where my presence is unwelcome. Farewell, therefore, Dora. Can you, ere I go, forgive me for all that seemed harsh or severe in my conduct to you?"

Dora turned upon him the full gaze of her calm eye. "I would forgive you," she said, "even had you designedly injured me: as it is, I can pity you. May God show us both the way of truth!"

She extended her hand. He took it, and held it for a moment in silence. Perhaps he expected that she would oppose his leaving Carlington, but she spoke not. At last, he kissed her cheek, and abruptly left the room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Io merto,
Misero me! tutto il tuo sdegno."

ALFIERI.

WHEN Dora entered the breakfast-room next morning, she found Sir Eustace reading a packet of letters he had just received. He rose to meet her, but the expression of distress and anxiety on his countenance was too strongly marked to escape her observation.

"Have you heard from Lady Fitzgerald?" she inquired. "Is anything the matter?"

"Cecilia is ill," he replied; "but that is not the saddest part of the news I have received. Read this, Dora."

He placed an open letter in her hand. A glance revealed its terrible contents. Dora became deadly pale as she read; but the horror of the intelligence seemed to shut up every other sign of emotion.

"You must go," she said to Sir Eustace. "Oh, my dear aunt, how must your heart be wrung!" They were both silent for some moments. "The law will disannul this marriage," said Dora, at last; "but who will restore her peace?"

"The villain!" exclaimed Sir Eustace; "let us meet once more, and he will not so easily elude my vengeance. I will instantly set out for Normandy; but you, Dora ——"

"Think not of me," she interrupted; "I will remain with my aunt here until you return."

"I cannot leave you here," said Sir Eustace. "Will you not go to Cecilia?—Miss Beauford will accompany you."

"I could not suffer her to travel with the speed you must use, and will rather await you here. If my aunt should wish me to go to her, I will follow, with Miss Beauford; but as soon as Cecilia can travel, you will hasten home, will you not?"

"Yes; but that may not be for some time; and meanwhile, I cannot leave you in danger. Will you at least go to Dublin?"

"I would rather not," said Dora. "I have thought of it, but I think it is better to remain here, and at this time I especially wish to be at home. If there be danger, many here are equally exposed to it, and I will not desert them."

"Let all who are obnoxious to Mr. Mowbray accompany you," said Sir Eustace; "you will thus secure at once your own safety and theirs."

"I do not think my safety is menaced," said Dora quietly. "I believe Mr. Mowbray would not readily suffer evil to befall me; and it is easy to guard against the possibility of danger."

Sir Eustace forbore further remonstrance. He agreed with Dora that it was very improbable any attempt at abduction or personal restraint would be made, while the newly-discovered intrigues of the priest were still fresh in the public mind; and he satisfied himself with obtaining her promise to give up her solitary walks, and have some one always within her call. Early in the forenoon he set out upon his journey. When Dora heard the last echo of his carriage-wheels die away in the distance, a sense of loneliness and danger for a few moments overcame her; but shaking it off, she committed herself to the care of the God in whom, though darkly and feebly, she had begun to trust; and, with a heart calmed and elevated by that confidence, though full of anxious participation in the sorrow of those so dear to her, she rejoined Miss Beauford.

"Well, it's little I thought of gettin' sight of you again, Mrs. Sullivan," exclaimed Mrs. O'Riley; "and sure, the things that have come around in this Castle these two days are enough

to drive one's wits away; but there's a Providence that takes care of the fatherless and the innocent, and so it's been seen."

"Me heart was sore for her yesterday mornin'," said Kathleen; "and sure I was that no look 'ud come iv the marriage they were drivin' her into, for it's driven she was, sure enough; and Sir Eustace in her heart all the time. She looked like a lamb in innocence, that was jist going to be killed—so gentle, and thim brakin' the heart iv her!"

"Bad cess to the false villins!" said nurse; "sure no good comes to thim that would hinder the coorse iv true love, to say nothin' iv the other things they'd been doin'; and she dressed in yellow, too, for her weddin'! didn't it show the ill look was in it? But we'll have a gay weddin' yet; and long may Sir Eustace and our lady live to reign over us!"

"Have ye it for sartin that they will be married, Mrs. Sullivan?" asked Mrs. O'Riley; "not that I'm wishin' to pry into more than ye're at liberty to tell us; but they're within the forbidden degrees, and our young lady was mighty particular always in her religion."

"Thrue for ye, Mrs. Riley, and so she was, the darlint," said nurse; "and I'm sayin' nothin' against our religion; but inyhow, they can get a dispinsation from his Holiness, sure—that will set all right."

"Wasn't it well that Sir Eustace came in whin he did?" said Kathleen; "sure, if he'd been ten minites later, none could have untied the knot."

"It was a hard ride we had," said nurse; "and a sore fright I was in, afther all, that he'd be too late. Whin we'd landed at Cark, we stopped at the post-office, whilst the boy was gittin' the carriage ready, and asked, Were there any letthers? 'None, yer honor,' said the man; and thin Sir Eustace asked whether any news was goin' in the counthrey? 'None,' says he. So hearin' nothin' particular at all, Sir Eustace asked, 'Was my Lord Belmont at Glenarven?" and the man said, 'He was gone over to Carlington, and he had heard say that he

was afther the young lady at the Castle, there.' Wid that the horses were ready, and Sir Eustace bid thim dhrive like mad; but whin we were on the road, at a lonely place, they began to plunge, an' they bruk the pole iv the carriage, an' we could not get another, and so we took horses from a little inn by the roadside, an' his honor was for lavin' me there, for, wid the long ride still before us, 'It will be too much for you,' said he. 'Plase yer honor, it will not,' says I; 'I'll niver bid you slack bit or spur for me:' so he said nothin' agin me. An' we rode on the two iv us, an' id's the fire you might have seen flyin' round our horses' feet. The sun was risin' whin we got near. We stopped at the lodge to ask how was all up at the Castle. So they tould us all was well; but, says they, 'our young lady is to be married this mornin'.' And whin the word was spoken, Sir Eustace put spurs to his horse, mine followin', and though we'd two miles to go, I think we niver touched the ground, the trees on the lawn went round wid me, and I saw nothin' till I stood on the flure iv the chapel, and me lady—God bless her!—standin' at the althar; and sure that was a sorrowful sight."

"In truth, and a sorrowful sight it was to more nor you," said Kathleen; "and whin we heard the horses' feet, it came over me heart that there was help in id; and its right glad I was whin Sir Eustace burst in."

"Sure and so was meself," exclaimed Mrs. O'Riley; "but when I saw you, Mrs. Sullivan, I thought it was nothin' but yer spirit come back to stop the weddin'."

"Indeed, thin, mother dear," said Lanty, "and I thought the same meself; and it wasn't till I got a hould iv ye that I knowed it was yerself in the body at all."

"Kape a good heart, boys, and defind our lady till his lardship Sir Eustace gets back, an' all will go well, yet," said nurse.

"They'll git their desarvins," said Lanty, flourishing his shillalla, "that will be afther disturbing the pace of the Castle iny more."

"Well," said nurse, "I must up and be goin' to me lady.

Isn't it the brave heart she has, the darlint, afther all that's happened! Sure, didn't the sowl almost lave me body whin I saw her standin' so pale."

"Id's a thousand years in purgatory he'll have, I'll go bail," said O'Brien; and I wish his sowl may be white afther all. Shure, isn't id the orphan he's been desavin' and ill-tratin', to say nothin' iv the widy—that's yerself, Mrs. Sullivan."

"Whist, arrah!" said Mrs. O'Riley, cautiously shutting the door as she spoke. "Shure thim boys will niver rest widout runnin' their heads aginst a stone; ye might know by this time id's as well to be hearin' much and spakin' little whin his rivirence is consarned; and id's not every day I'll be afther bilin' pase for ye, Brian, me boy."

A general laugh followed this declaration, and the party continued their conversation in a lower tone.

"Did yees know," said Lanty, "that meself is ardered out at break iv day to-morrow, to take Mrs. Harris to Cark? I've a mind to spill her on the way."

"Hould yer whist, will ye, I say agin!" said the prudent Mrs. O'Riley; "and take care what ye're about, Lanty Sullivan, or id's into throuble you'll be gittin'."

"Troth, an' it's much ill she's wrought our lady," said nurse, in a low tone; "and a bad desateful woman id's meself that knows her to be; hows'ever, I'll be wishin' no ill to her, for shure we're tould to forgive our inimies, more be token that me lady's escaped her hands."

"She's takin' on most terrible!" said Kathleen. "The poor crathur! me heart is sore to see the way she's in, afther all. The bit and the sup stood by her all yesterday; and whin ye sint me, ma'am, to ask would she take any supper, there was the dinner me own hands tuk her standin' on the table. 'Mrs. Harris, ma'am,' says I, 'id's a mortial pity to see ye take on so bad intirely; shure, if id was the praste's bidden' ye were afther, the sin'll fall on other heads than yours (namin' no names at all, at all, for if ye don't be spakin', shure there's none

can repate yer spache,) an' our young lady—the saints be about her !—is well, an' no harm come to her afther all.' So she answered me as quiet as a lamb—for ye niver seen a woman so changed. 'My good girl,' she said, 'It is not the part I have taken alone that grieves me, since our young lady has not suffered ; and I did it ignorantly.'"

"A purty kind iv ignorance i' troth," interrupted Lanty ; "she could rade an' she could spell, I'll go bail, as well as the praste himself, and knowed the differ, at laste, I'm thinkin', 'atwixt me lady's letthers an' her oun."

"Hould yer whisht, Lanty !" said Mrs. O'Riley ; "ye'll put the sinse out iv the girl's head intirely wid yer bad manners, takin' the word out iv her mouth in that fashion. Go on Kathleen, agrah !"

"'It is my conversion,' she said again, 'that distresses me now, for I have turned away from the true faith, and I never can know peace again, as long as I live.' 'Id's a long road that has no turnin', ma'am dear,' says I ; 'kape up yer heart, an' there's no saying what's in id yet ; we should hope for the best, an' prepare for the worst. We're all born, but we're not all buried ; an' sure ye can make a clane breast, and be as pure as a child for all that's come an' gone.' 'Ah ! no, Kathleen,' she said ; 'I have no rest now in the Catholic faith, for the priest cannot absolve me, and yet I have turned from my own religion.' So whin she began in this fashion, 'Id may be all very thrue, ma'am,' says I ; 'but I'd betther not be putting me sowl in danger wid hearin' anythin' against the Church ;' so I bid good-night, and kem away wid that word ; but shure, if she be a hiritic afther all, id's no wonder she's in a mortial terror, for there's no absolution, they say, and no confission in their Church ; an' id would be a terrible thing intirely to be carryin' yer sins always about wid yees !"

Nurse had for some time been a silent listener to the gossip of the party. She now abruptly broke the silence, and said, with a solemnity that startled the eager group—"Id's God only

that can forgive sins, Kathleen alanna, whether in their Church or ours; shure He can hear thim that prays to Him in their own spache as well as in larned tongues; an' if He came to save us before any asked Him, He'll not forbid us to come to Him, though we've nather praste nor mass-book to show us the way."

No one spoke for some minutes after nurse had ceased. Mrs. O'Riley, at last, said, "Thrue for ye, Mrs. Sullivan, see what a fine thing id is to have larnin'; an' shure, ma'am, id's grand to have been in furrin parts, an' a grate dale ye must have seen there."

"A grate dale I saw, an' a grate dale I heard, that I've no call to be afther mintionin', Mrs. Riley agrah; but id was whin I was lyin' lonely an' sorrowful in the turret, an' none near to spake the good word or make any debate for me; oh, id was thin me heart 'ud have broken intirely, only that the great God above tuk pity on me, an' brought to me mind that His ear is open to the cry of the distitute. Bud id's time I was goin' to me lady; so good night to ye, Mrs. Riley, ma'am, and God save ye kindly, childher."

Nurse's duties were completed, and she had left the room, when Dora was surprised by hearing a slow and cautious footstep in the ante-room. Supposing it to be the old woman returned, and that she feared to disturb her, she said, "Come in, nurse, I am not asleep."

The lights were out, and in the faint beams of a waning moon, which alone illuminated the apartment, Dora did not immediately see who entered. The figure approached the bed.

"Is it you, nurse?"

A moment's silence followed, and Dora could not prevent an involuntary shudder when the voice of Harris answered—

"I have ventured to come, Miss Mowbray, at the only hour when I could hope for access to your presence. I know, indeed, that your faithful attendant is even now within your call, but surely you will permit me to speak with you. There is nothing *to dread* in the presence of one so wretched."

"I do not fear you, Harris," answered Dora, calmly; "but I desire not any explanation of the past, and all I can have to say is, that I freely forgive you."

"Yet hear me, for mercy's sake!" exclaimed Harris, sinking on her knees; "if you cast me off, I am lost for ever. Could you but read the black despair of this heart, you would not deny the drop of balm your pity at least might afford. The horrors of these past days have been more than human flesh can sustain."

Moved with a compassion which the remembrance of her own wrongs could not efface, and fearful, from the wildness of her manner, that Harris's mind was unsettled, Dora spoke in a more soothing tone. "There is mercy," she said, "Harris, with One who has power on earth to forgive sins. My pardon, if it can promote your peace, I freely give, but turn to Him who is able to give consolation even in the darkest hour."

"Yet hear me, hear me, I implore you!" said Harris, clasping her hands with vehemence; "I dare not pray, I dare not hope, till I have told you all."

"Rise, then, and be calm," said Dora, gently, for Harris continued to kneel, and the violence of her manner was increasing; "I will hear what you have to say, if you will control this excitement."

She went on more calmly—

"I have injured you, Miss Mowbray, but it was as the tool of others. My youth, lady, was bright and innocent as your own, but difficulties and distress invaded my home, and whilst yet a girl, I became an orphan and a wanderer over the world. The pure religion that had been taught me in my childhood was forgotten; ambition became my idol, and, free from the restraints of home and kindred, with life before me, I cared not what were the means, which led me to the objects I desired. In this state of mind I met with Father Adrien. In proof of the sincerity of my speech, I now acknowledge, that I had known him in France, and it was through his means, though

unknown to be so, that I was recommended to Miss Beauford. He held before me the rewards I coveted, and I became the willing agent of his purposes. No fear of God or man restrained me; but the hour of awakening came. In the darkness of night, in the depth of that solitude in which I spent most of my time, reflection awoke remorse—remorse that can never die. I told all to Father Adrien; I implored him to find some balm for the anguish that was consuming me. Then it was that he spoke of prayer and penance—that he bound my soul seven-fold with the yoke of the Church. Vigils and fasts I kept till my strength was well-nigh exhausted. I confessed, and he gave me absolution; and I laid the unction to my soul, and thought that I had peace. It was then I came here. Father Adrien told me that you would be lost, body and soul, if you broke through the Church's ban. He said that if I saved you, it would be mercy to you, and salvation to me. Thus I became his obedient tool, and when your kindness had won my heart, and I loved you, I thought the growing pain I suffered only added to my merits. But the spell broke. I saw that falsehood and violence lurked in that Church whose faith I had adopted, and I knew it could be no Church of Christ. And now I dare not renounce my allegiance to it, for Father Adrien has the power of vengeance, fatal and relentless; I have come to you to protect me. If you send me away, I must continue my dreadful servitude, or perish."

Dora listened with intense interest to the unhappy woman's narrative, and when she had concluded, she was silent for a few minutes before she answered.

"If my forgiveness is any comfort," said she at last, "it is yours, but it is better for us both that you should not remain here; you will be safer and more free elsewhere; and I"—— she paused a moment, and then added, "Time must prove your sincerity, before I can again repose in you the trust you have betrayed."

While Dora spoke, Harris continued kneeling, with her eyes

fixed upon her face; but when she ceased, she rose; and drawing her tall figure to its utmost height, said, "For the first and the last time I have knelt a suppliant, and my suit has been rejected. Lady! the hour will come when you will pray of me to give you aid, and I will reject the suit, though tears of blood enforced it! Humanity and I, henceforth, are severed."

She turned and left the room. Dora continued to meditate on this strange interview until the night was far spent, and awoke, after a short and feverish slumber, determined not to lose sight of the extraordinary being whom, despite of all the evil she had wrought her, she could not regard without interest. She rang for nurse, to desire that Harris might come to her before leaving Carlington. She knew that her decision was right, and could not but feel she had treated Harris with greater kindness than she deserved—yet her heart yearned to speak some word of kindness to her ere she went; to soothe, if possible, the feelings that were evidently in so strong and unnatural a state of excitement. But the opportunity was past. When Harris was sought for, her room was found empty. It was left in perfect order, and an account of all that had been under her charge placed in a conspicuous position, but no trace appeared of the means by which she had effected her departure. Dora and Miss Beauford concluded that she had made use of her knowledge of the secret avenues from the Castle, and perhaps found a boat ready to convey her to the nearest seaport; but the servants and country people continued firm in the belief that she possessed supernatural powers, and had been carried away by the spirits with whom she was in league.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Yes! weep, my sister! weep till from thy heart
The weight flow forth in tears: yet sink thou not;
I bind my sorrow to a lofty part
For thee, my gentle one! our lot
To meet in quenchless trust; my soul is strong—
Thou, too, wilt rise in holy might ere long."

SISTERS OF SCIO.

WITH a heart full of anxious thought, Sir Eustace pursued his way. Regarding Dora, he was so far at rest, for he did not, under present circumstances, dread any attempt upon her safety, and he saw that, whatever might be the result of her present search for truth, her mind at least was for ever set free from the trammels of superstition. But Cecilia—his innocent sister—when he thought of her, his whole soul seemed on fire. Blighted, destroyed in the very bloom of her life, by a consummate treachery that, in betraying her peace, had aimed at the hitherto unsullied honor of his house;—his blood boiled as he thought of her misery, and her family's wrongs, and he longed to see at his feet the wretch who had dealt the blow. He would have hastened his journey, for he yearned to console the being whom he regarded with almost parental tenderness; but he was detained for some days in London, by necessary consultations with lawyers regarding the most speedy means of annulling the fatal marriage, which he burned to dissolve.

As soon as these affairs were arranged, Sir Eustace set out *on his journey* to Normandy. On the following day he arrived

at the Château de V——. His meeting with Lady Fitzgerald was calm on both sides. His agony was too great for ordinary expression ; and she was still ignorant of the fatal truth.

"Tell me how she is?" said Sir Eustace, after a short silence into which both had fallen.

"She is out of danger for the present," said Lady Fitzgerald ; "but I fear it will be long, if ever, before she returns to anything like her former health. Her happy, childlike self, alas! she can never be again. But we may yet secure her from misery, Eustace ; she loves Count Romilli, and could she be assured of our forgiveness, and hear that he yet lives, she says she would be happy. We might still, whether in Italy or Ireland, be near to watch over her, and surely he could not be unkind to my innocent child?"

Sir Eustace was silent ; his soul was wrung at the thought of the tale he must unfold. But he was recalled from his gloomy reverie by his mother's appealing look.

"My dearest mother," he said, gently taking her hand, "Cecilia will never be taken from us ; in that at least let us rejoice. The wretch who has destroyed her peace, possesses no husband's right to tear her from our arms—he is a priest of Rome."

A cry of horror arose to Lady Fitzgerald's lips ; but, long accustomed to control her emotions, she checked it. Her frame shivered with agony, and her features assumed a deadly paleness. It was long ere she spoke ; at last she exclaimed, "My child, my lost child!—this will kill her. Oh! may God help me to sustain this fearful blow, and forgive the destroyer."

"Forgive him!" exclaimed Sir Eustace, his eyes flashing fire ; "would he were but within the reach of this arm ; he should know the vengeance he has dared to provoke!"

"Vengeance belongeth to the Lord," said Lady Fitzgerald ; "and too surely it will find him out. But oh! my child, my Cecilia, who will console you now?"

An emotion he could not control agitated Sir Eustace at

these words, and tears that no earthly event had ever called forth before, burst from his eyes.

"Let me see her," he said.

"Be calm, then," said Lady Fitzgerald. "Her life hangs upon your firmness. She must not learn the dreadful truth."

"She cannot be long kept in ignorance of it," said Sir Eustace. "Her consent is necessary to the proceedings now begun in England, for proving invalid this hated bond."

"They must be delayed," said Lady Fitzgerald, earnestly; "we cannot endanger her life."

"Every hour of delay reflects a stigma upon our honor," said Sir Eustace; "yet she must be guarded from harm. Fear not to trust her with me," he added; "the blood in my veins is not more dear to me than her peace."

"I know it, my son, I know it," said Lady Fitzgerald. "I could not doubt you; but we will talk of this matter again."

"Certainly nothing shall be done without your approval; and a few days at least can make little difference."

Lady Fitzgerald went to prepare Cecilia for this wished-for but dreaded interview. She was sitting, supported by pillows, in a large chair near the window. The casement was open, and the perfume of flowers, in which she delighted, was wafted round her by the soft warm breeze. Her white robe was hardly more colorless than the form it enwrapped; and, as she languidly reposed in her chair, her gaze, tranquil though sad, fixed in dreamy abstraction on the lovely scene before her, she was so like a form sculptured from the purest alabaster, that her blue eyes alone, and the golden light of her wavy ringlets, broke the spell, and told she breathed and lived.

"He has come—I know he has come, mother!" she exclaimed, turning round as Lady Fitzgerald approached her. "Tell me, does he forgive me?"

"He forgives and loves you, my child, as fondly as ever, and he longs to embrace you now."

"Then let him come; I will hear it from his own lips, and then—then all may yet be well."

Agonized by the fond hopes that she knew must so soon be destroyed, Lady Fitzgerald left the room, and returned with Sir Eustace. For one instant, ere Cecilia saw him, he stood near the door gazing on the lovely being before him. The next he advanced. Cecilia heard his footstep, and rose to meet him; he opened his arms, and she threw herself upon his bosom. Long was she held there, while the ineffable consolation of feeling how fondly, how faithfully she was beloved, descended into her heart, and soothed its aching wounds. Long was she held, while his heart was rent by the knowledge, that ere he could heal, he must tear afresh that gentle spirit that clung to him with such confiding tenderness, as if he had power to shield her from all earthly ill.

At last he left her to repose. He retired to his room, but not to sleep. Thoughts of the past crowded thickly upon his mind. He seemed again to live over the days when his innocent sister, free and happy as a summer bird, had been the very sunlight of his path. He remembered the bounding step, and glad eye that used to welcome him home; the autumn evenings when she wandered by his side, and would climb the most rugged hills, or ventured along the steepest precipice when he held her hand, even her timid nature fearing no evil when with him. He thought of her now—blighted, betrayed, and again his heart burned with a vengeance that his still imperfect knowledge of God's truth hardly told him partook of sin, and did not enable him to subdue. But he saw that the thread of life in his sister's fragile form was held by a very feeble tenure, and he inwardly determined, that come what would, her quiet must be preserved.

Early in the morning, Lady Fitzgerald, who was exhausted by many nights' watching, yielded to Cecilia's entreaties that she would seek repose, and left her for a short time under the care of an attendant lately procured, but who appeared faithful

and attentive. Cecilia had been but a short time alone with her, when she cautiously drew near the bed, and leant over it to ascertain whether her lady slept.

"I am not asleep, Brunelle," said Cecilia; "do you want anything?"

The woman replied by drawing from her bosom a note, which she placed in Cecilia's hand. It was from Count Romilli. A thrill of joy, mastering for the moment all other feelings, agitated her frame, on this assurance that he lived.

Breaking the seal she read a few hurried lines, stating that he had been unexpectedly prevented, by circumstances beyond his control, from meeting her, according to their appointment; that he had heard of her illness and partial convalescence, and on the 10th of that month (this was the 1st), one hour after midnight, he would await her in the garden. He would be provided with a litter and attendants to bear her through the forest, and as her room was on the ground-floor, it would be easy for her to step out to the piazza, where he would be ready to receive her. Meanwhile, he enjoined the strictest secrecy. In the first joy of knowing that her husband lived, Cecilia marked not the tone of his letter, but a second perusal struck a painful chill to her heart, she knew not why, for words of love glowed upon the page, and she would not have acknowledged to herself that it had brought her aught but gladness; yet she relinquished the idea that at first had possessed her of telling him that their marriage was known, and imploring him to come openly to those who, for her sake, were ready to receive him. Instead of this she wrote a few lines, saying she would be ready to meet him at the time appointed; she had much to say, but entreated him not yet to urge her to leave her home. She gave this note to her attendant, inquiring, at the same time, how she had received that from Count Romilli.

"It was given me, ma'amselle," replied the maid, "by a man *on horseback*, who rode suddenly up to me when I was in the

forest yesterday. He desired me to deposit the answer in the hollow of a tree near where we stood, and he would return for it."

"Could it be Romilli himself?"—the thought had hardly passed through Cecilia's mind when it was dispelled by Brunelle's next words—

"He was an old man, strong, and of a forbidding aspect; so I forbore to question him."

The note was placed as directed, and when, at Cecilia's desire, Brunelle went on the next evening to ascertain its fate, it was gone. From this hour Cecilia revived. The strong affection to which all her fear of her husband had lent a mysterious charm, re-awoke in unabated fervor. Her buoyant imagination, passing over every difficulty, pictured Romilli received by her family, and all happy at her own Ballyrowan.

Lady Fitzgerald and Sir Eustace saw and rejoiced in the change. She spoke of her home, and they fondly trusted that early memories and home-love were blotting out the remembrance of her blighting dream. She never named Romilli, for she could not deceive them now, and they thought the spell of his power was broken, and that she might pass undestroyed through the fearful ordeal yet before her.

Seeing her strength now able to bear the journey, Sir Eustace agreed with Lady Fitzgerald that it would be well to remove her to Ballyrowan before the dreadful disclosure was made that must test the strength of her soul.

"You are nearly able to travel now," said Lady Fitzgerald, one calm sunny evening, as they sat together in the portico, whither Cecilia's couch had been removed. "Should you not like to return home?"

"Every day is a year while I am absent from it," replied Cecilia, sighing; "my very heart yearns for my own woods and hills."

"You will soon see them once more, my child," said Lady Fitzgerald; "all is ready for us to set out. On Tuesday we begin our journey, and I have written to Dora, to meet us at Ballyrowan."

"Oh, I will be glad to return there," said Cecilia, earnestly; "but not on Tuesday, dear mother, let it be Thursday at least."

"The vessel sails on the 11th," said Lady Fitzgerald; "and we had purposed taking you to Havre on Tuesday, and resting there for one night; but if you would prefer it, we will delay till next week. You shall not be urged to move, my darling, until you feel able."

"I am able now," said Cecilia, "but I would rather wait."

A faint glow suffused her pale cheek as she spoke. Her mother looked anxiously at her changing countenance. But seeing that the observation distressed her, she turned away, believing it was only some association connected with her own history or feelings that made her wish a change of plan. The journey was therefore postponed.

For a day or two Cecilia appeared to preserve her tranquillity. Her mother and Sir Eustace remarked that she shrank from observation, yet, when herself unnoticed, they frequently caught an earnest gaze, whilst the anxiety that at such moments clouded her features, and her changing color, seemed to bespeak some emotion she would gladly have shared with those so dear to her.

On Tuesday, she appeared all day restless and excited. Her spirits were almost unnaturally gay, yet she would relapse into sudden and apparently unaccountable fits of melancholy.

"You do not feel so well to-day," said Sir Eustace, as he kissed her flushed cheek with more than usual tenderness, when about to leave her for the night. She did not reply, but leaning her head on his breast, burst into tears.

"What is the matter, my darling?" he inquired, anxiously. "Is anything distressing you? Tell me; and if it be possible, it shall be remedied."

"You will know all, but not now," replied Cecilia, so soon as her agitation would permit her to speak. "With you, dear Eustace, it remains to make me happy or miserable; I cannot *doubt* you. We shall all be happy soon; but, to-night, my

pirit is oppressed, and I feel afraid to let you go, as if you were ny guardian angel."

"Shall I stay with you, then? It is not late; let us sit by he window, and enjoy the coolness of this lovely night."

"No—oh, no!—I will go to rest; but promise me, Eustace," he said, in a whisper so low that he could hardly catch the rords; "promise me that you will forgive Romilli."

This was the first time she had named him; and as Sir Eustace held her to his breast, he felt thankful she could not see the flow of indignation that name must ever call forth.

"Doubt me not, my darling," he said, controlling his voice, o that its tones might awaken no suspicion. "You know that ny first desire is your happiness, and I can forgive any one who incerely joins me in seeking to promote it."

Cecilia appeared satisfied.

"Then we may yet be happy," she whispered, and fondly eturning her brother's embrace, she suffered him to leave her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"One moment more,
And life, all the beauty of life, is o'er.
What more remaineth? Her day was done."

MRS. HEMANS.

When Sir Eustace left Cecilia, a feeling of anxiety so strongly possessed his mind, that he could not retire to rest. The trembling agitation of her manner, her clinging to him as if to shield her from some impending evil, awakened a fear of some unknown danger which threatened her.

Lest he should be mistaken, he thought it better not to

alarm Lady Fitzgerald; but, acquainted as he was with the power and subtlety of the Catholic priesthood, he determined to keep watch over his sister, so as to frustrate any attempt that might be made to remove her from his protection.

Cecilia's room was at the opposite side of the *chateau* from his, but the saloon they usually occupied was next to her apartment, the window opening on the same veranda. Here he took up his watch. He now remembered her anxiety to delay their departure from Normandy, and a pang smote his heart at the thought that his innocent confiding sister should have been so far led astray from the paths of virtue as thus to deceive the friends who from infancy had watched over her with such devoted tenderness. But he remembered the resistless spell which those into whose power she had fallen were often known to exercise over their unhappy victims, and he ceased to wonder. He thought of the hidden anguish she had evidently endured, and the love that, with a closer grasp than ever, seemed to cling to her tried and trusted protector, and his very soul quivered with pity for her misery, and strong determination, at all hazards, to rescue her from its fangs.

The hour of midnight had passed in these musings, and suddenly the perfect stillness that for some time had reigned around, was broken by a soft and muffled tread upon the grass that bordered the avenue.

Sir Eustace softly approached the window, and, in the clear moonlight, distinctly saw the figures of three men advancing towards the *chateau*. The first, even in that light, he recognized to be Count Romilli. The others appeared to be attendants, and carried a litter.

Cautiously, but quickly, Sir Eustace summoned the servants on whose fidelity he could rely. They were but two, for the others were French, and strangers. By the time he had returned to the window with them, the Count had entered the piazza. The window of Cecilia's room softly opened, and she stepped out to meet him.

"Come, my love," said the Count, in a subdued whisper; "all is ready, and we must not lose a moment."

"I cannot go with you, Romilli," replied Cecilia, in the same low tone, but her voice trembled as she spoke; "I need not, for they now know all, and have forgiven me; come openly, they will receive you, and then all this dreadful deceit will be over."

"Who knows all?" inquired the Count, in an accent whose softness could not conceal the deadly rage that was kindling in his heart.

"My mother and my brother."

An oath hissed from between the closed lips of the Count.

"Infatuated girl," he exclaimed, "you have destroyed yourself and me!—But you *shall* go with me!" he said, after a few moments of apparent deliberation. "You shall go, and your ransom shall be costly. They will give half their possessions to win you back, and save the knowledge of your flight."

"What mean you, Romilli?" said Cecilia, trembling; "these are strange words—oh! force me not away."

"On your peril, come!" he exclaimed. A faint cry burst from her lips, but he threw over her a cloak he held, and was raising her in his arms, when he was seized from behind, and, in an instant, laid prostrate on the ground.

Hastily placing Cecilia in her room, Sir Eustace returned to aid his servants who were now struggling with the Count's attendants. A few moments decided the conflict. The *chateau* was aroused; lights appeared at the windows, the servants rushed forth in alarm, and the Count's attendants took flight into the forest.

The Count saw that his cause was hopeless; and, by a sudden movement, freeing himself for a moment from the grasp of Sir Eustace, he succeeded in reaching his horse, which was tied to a tree hard by; and throwing himself upon it, was immediately out of sight.

Cecilia had fainted at the beginning of the contest; and her

mother, who was with her, forbore to arouse her to a consciousness which could bring but agony. She lay on a couch, her head supported on her mother's breast. No sign of life appeared in her pale form, and as Sir Eustace bent over her, he felt that he could be almost willing to let her pass to her rest, rather than recall her to the anguish she must endure.

At last she breathed a long-drawn sigh, and opening her eyes, fixed them on her mother's face. "What is wrong, mother?" she said. "I feel a weight here," placing her hand upon her heart. "Oh! Romilli!—I remember," she exclaimed, starting up with a look of horror, as awaking memory brought back all the dreadful truth. "But what has happened?—he spoke some fearful words, and Eustace—Eustace came and seized my husband! Oh! mother, what is it all?"

"Be calm, my darling, and you shall know all. Count Romilli is safe."

"Safe!" repeated Cecilia, half vacantly; "safe? but where is he?—let me go to him—he is my husband. Eustace, you said you would forgive him?"

"All you would wish shall be done for your happiness, my darling," said Sir Eustace, tenderly kissing her cheek; and, with a look that told Lady Fitzgerald that he thought no time should now be lost in revealing the fatal truth, he left the room.

"Mother," said Cecilia, again turning to Lady Fitzgerald, "there is something I do not know; tell me all, and I will bear it."

"Yes, darling," said her mother gently; "God will strengthen us to bear all; and remember, you have done no wrong but that which already is confessed, and, I trust, forgiven."

"Is he dead?" gasped Cecilia. "Only tell me that, mother?"

"He lives, and is well."

"Ah! then, anything. I can bear everything now—tell me the worst."

"And if you found he had deceived you, could you be con-

tent to leave him, my child, and remain with those who love you so fondly, if you knew that he was well?"

Cecilia was silent for some time. Her brow was clouded, and many thoughts seemed working in her mind.

"But it would be wrong to leave him?" she said at last; "he is my husband, and I have vowed to cleave to him through life; and oh! I wish it, mother."

She ceased; but her eyes, still fixed upon her mother's face, seemed to implore her to reveal what yet remained.

"Would you wish it, my child," said Lady Fitzgerald, "if you found that he had deceived and betrayed you?"

Cecilia was silent for a few moments. Many feelings contended for the mastery, but one was still triumphant, and she calmly answered, "I would."

"Is that because of your vows, my darling?" inquired Lady Fitzgerald gently. "If a wife's duty were no longer yours, would you still love him thus?"

A faint light seemed to dawn through her mother's words upon Cecilia's mind; she started forward with a cry of horror. "Not his wife! mother, you cannot mean that?"

"Be calm, my darling," said Lady Fitzgerald; "to you those vows were true, but he had no right to claim them."

She paused; Cecilia's gaze sought what her lips refused to utter. Her mother answered the look—"He is a priest, my child."

Gently as the truth had been communicated, the blow fell too heavily upon the delicate frame of the unfortunate girl. As the fatal words were uttered, she sunk as if death-struck in her mother's arms, and it was long ere the means tried succeeded in restoring her to life. When she opened her eyes, she was supported in her brother's arms. She shuddered, and withdrawing herself from his breast, turned from the eyes that regarded her with a look such as had never before met their fond gaze, and entreated to be left alone.

Though fearful, in her extreme weakness, of leaving her un-

watched, they had no other choice but to comply; and, retiring from her room, Lady Fitzgerald passed to the saloon, from which she could hear every sound in Cecilia's apartment. Here she spent the night in prayer for her unhappy child. From time to time her heart was wrung by the groans that seemed the very rending of soul and body; but towards morning all was still, and she trusted that exhausted nature had found a transient relief in sleep.

The morning was far advanced ere Lady Fitzgerald ventured to enter. When at last she softly opened the door, she found her seated on the couch she usually occupied. Her eyes were fixed on the ground; and ere she was aware of her mother's entrance, Lady Fitzgerald had time to observe her.

A change greater than years could have wrought had passed upon her. The hue of life had vanished from her cheek. The love and hope that once had beamed in her varying countenance were gone, and a cold rigid stillness had taken their place, as if death had already passed, and chilled all the pulses of the inner life, while her bodily senses still could feel and act.

As her mother drew near, Cecilia turned at the sound of her footstep, but the smile that had ever greeted her return was gone. Lady Fitzgerald sat down beside her, and putting her arm round her, gently drew her towards her. She turned upon her mother the full light of her blue eyes, but oh, how changed was their gaze!

"I have one question to ask, and you will answer me truly," she said. Her words were slow and measured, her tone hollow and unnatural. "Where is Count Romilli?"

"I know not, my child; he is gone, but we know not whither."

"And you will not pursue him?"

"No; even if we wished to do so, it would be of no use, as we know him only under what is probably a feigned name."

"Then all is over," said Cecilia; "I have nothing more now to do."

"*What* do you mean, my darling?" said Lady Fitzgerald,

anxiously, for something in the tone of her child's voice fell ominously upon her ear.

Cecilia did not immediately answer; she continued silently to gaze with a look of unutterable love in her mother's face; at last she said, "Let me rest my head on your bosom, as in the happy days gone by. Can you take your ungrateful child, mother? It will not be for long."

"Speak not thus, my darling," said Lady Fitzgerald, drawing her closely to her, and supporting her throbbing head upon her breast; "here, in sorrow or joy, is ever your home. You have erred, my child, but oh! you have been sorely betrayed."

"I could not have been so, had I not first betrayed your trust in me, mother; and it is but the just punishment of my sin, that perfidy should bring my young life to the grave."

"Not so, my darling," said Lady Fitzgerald; "do not thus rend my heart; you will live for the sake of those who love you. These days of darkness will pass, and new light arise upon our path."

"No earthly light will ever shine on mine," said Cecilia solemnly. "No, my mother, I feel the death-wound here," pressing her hand upon her heart; "wish it not otherwise."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Mother, O sing me to rest,
As in the bright days departed;
Sing to thy child, the sick-hearted,
Songs for her spirit oppress'd.
Take back thy bird to its nest:
Weary is young life when blighted."

MRS. HEMANS.

FROM the day that the dreadful tale of Count Romilli's perfidy was known to her, Cecilia never smiled again. It was soon too evident to all around her that she had indeed "received her death-wound."

Lady Fitzgerald and Sir Eustace became very anxious to remove her to Ballyrowan, still fondly cherishing the hope, that amidst the scenes and associations of her early life, happier feelings might revive, and the fearful storm that had wrecked her peace be hushed into calm at least, if not into sunshine; but she so markedly shrunk from every proposal of returning, that they ceased to urge it.

"Not to Ballyrowan; you will not ask me to go there," she said one day to Lady Fitzgerald, when she had cautiously ventured to re-introduce the subject. "When this heart has ceased to beat, the green woods of Ballyrowan may bend their branches over my grave, but my foot shall never more press the shores of my native land."

"Why do you not wish to return home, my child?" said Lady Fitzgerald; "think how many loving hearts would welcome *you there.*"

Cecilia was silent for a moment. Tears, the first her mother had seen since the day that had ruined her earthly hopes, filled her eyes; but she repressed them, and said calmly—

"I have brought misery on all who are dear to me; but though anguish and reproach must be my portion, I will never carry them within that sanctuary where all is peace and holiness, and from which my own act has shut me out for ever."

"Ah! my child," said Lady Fitzgerald earnestly, "our own act has shut us out from a fairer paradise, but the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has re-opened the gates of our heavenly inheritance, and He too it is who has bestowed on you your earthly home. Enjoy it for His sake."

Cecilia was silent, but listened with evidently deep interest while her mother continued—"Would to God, my darling, that I could lead you to see the difference between that 'godly sorrow' for sin 'which worketh repentance,' and 'the sorrow of the world which worketh death.' It is this last sorrow that is consuming your life, while you think not of that far heavier sin you are committing in not believing that our Saviour is able and willing to save you."

Cecilia listened earnestly, and at last said—

"I know that our Lord Jesus Christ can save me from hell." She stopped.

"And if He saves you from hell, whither must He take you?" inquired Lady Fitzgerald.

"He may make me to pass through the purifying fires of purgatory," said Cecilia thoughtfully.

"You are passing now, my dear child, through intense suffering of mind, and much pain and weakness of body; do you find that they make you less sinful?"

"Oh, no! the weariness of my spirit rather tempts me to sin."

"Then suffering alone cannot purify us. Remember that suffering is of no use unless the Spirit of God be given us to enforce the lessons it conveys; and if it be indeed the Holy Spirit's power that sanctifies the heart, He can do so by one means as

well as another. 'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee,' are the words of the Holy Spirit to the Church—the Bride of Christ. His atonement, my darling, far exceeds our sins, be they ever so great. Surely there cannot be guilt in a human being of so deep a dye that God would not consider the blood of His own Son sufficient to wash it away?"

Cecilia was silent, but an expression of intense thought had gathered on her brow, and her mother left her to pursue it undisturbed.

In conversation with her child, Lady Fitzgerald never entered on the disputed points between the Catholic and Protestant beliefs. Cecilia's conversion had been one of feeling, not conviction; and now that the spell which had bound her was broken, her mind, instructed in a purer faith, recoiled from that which she felt had blinded her reason, not convinced it, and returned gladly to the simple instructions of her childhood.

When Lady Fitzgerald found Cecilia unwilling to go to Ballyrowan, she became anxious to have Dora with them. She saw that her child's mind constantly dwelt on one subject, from brooding on which she would gladly have aroused her.

"Would you like Dora to come to us here?" she said, one day, when they had just heard from her; "I am sure if she knew you wished it, she would join us."

"I would rather not," answered Cecilia. "Let me see no one, mother, but you and Eustace. Why should I throw the shadow of my misery over her tender spirit?" She paused, and continued silent for some minutes—then said, "How differently would Dora's noble nature have acted from what I have done! She will be a better daughter to you, dear mother, than I. Tell her it was not want of love that made me wish her not to come. Ah! no; where I love deepest, I am least willing to let my shadow fall. If I could, I would send you, mother, even you, away from me—and Eustace too; and when I knew that you were all happy together in my sweet home, then I would lay *down my head* and die, rejoicing that I was forgotten."

"Your mother's heart will cease to beat ere it forgets you, my child," said Lady Fitzgerald, tears filling her eyes as she spoke. "Oh that you could put away this morbid self-reproach, and, as a forgiven child, cast yourself into the arms both of your heavenly and your earthly parent. There is joy in heaven, my darling, over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance."

Cecilia's eyes filled with tears as her mother uttered these words. When she ceased, she turned away her head, and Lady Fitzgerald left her to rest.

From that time the icy chain which had bound her seemed dissolved. She did not express her feelings, but one mild afternoon she appeared stronger than usual; her couch was placed in the veranda, and she lay enjoying the lingering beauty of autumn. A soft light came to her eye, and a calm tenderness in her voice told that there was peace within. She turned suddenly to her mother—

"Mother, will you take me to Ballyrowan?"

"Gladly, my darling," replied Lady Fitzgerald, in a tone of pleased surprise; "we shall set out immediately, if you wish it."

"I do wish it now, dear mother. It was pride that kept me from wishing it before. I did not know till lately what a proud wayward heart I had. I delighted in the love that cherished me, and did not feel unworthy of it. I thought I had never grieved you, but when I felt that I had betrayed that love, my sick heart longed to turn from it all, and perish, forgotten in a lonely grave. Then you told me there was joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth; and I know, mother, there is joy on earth. Why, then, should I not receive as a gift that which I once thought my desert?—a boon the sweeter because it is bestowed by Him who has forgiven my sins. So I will go back to my sweet home, mother, and rejoice to know that it is given me for my Saviour's sake."

A few days afterwards they sailed for Ireland.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Ha! who comes here?
I think it is the weakness of my eyes
That shapes this monstrous apparition.
It comes upon me! Art thou anything?
Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil?
Thou mak'st my blood cold, and my hairs to stand!
Speak to me! What art thou?"

JULIUS CÆSAR.

"You have letters from France, I see, this morning, Dora?" said Miss Beauford, as she entered the breakfast-room. "How is your poor cousin?"

"She is rather better," replied Dora, giving the letter, with a sweet smile, to the venerable lady; "and they are to return immediately to Ballyrowan."

"Where they wish you to meet them, I see," said Miss Beauford, taking off her spectacles. "Well, my dear, we will go whenever you choose."

"You have no objection to go, aunt?" inquired Dora.

"Not in the least, my love; the journey is a short one, and if it were ten times as far, I would undertake it. Both you and your cousin have suffered a great deal, and I consider it my duty to do what I can for you. I see by this letter that Sir Eustace and Lady Fitzgerald have not thought it proper as yet to inform her of Count Romilli's perfidy. Well, to be sure, they know best; but it is a sad thing to think of her wasting her thoughts and feelings upon such a wretch as that, when, no *doubt, if she* but knew of his wickedness, she would hate and

despise him as much as they could wish, and get over it much sooner."

"I fear not," said Dora. "To a sensitive mind like Cecilia's, the consciousness of the injury done to her family, through her means, would be worse than any personal suffering."

"Well, to be sure, that is very dreadful, and she has herself to thank for it all, poor girl. It is a sad thing when young people *will* think for themselves, and throw off the authority of their elders; but still she is very young, and as there is no doubt that the law will pronounce her perfectly free, if she lives quietly for a few years, which, of course, she would prefer, the affair may be forgotten, and with her beauty and fortune, she may make an excellent marriage yet. Do you know what I had settled in my own mind, Dora, before all these dreadful things came out?—That poor Lord Belmont, who is really a very nice young man, though not to be compared to Sir Eustace, should, in time, have got over his disappointment, and married Cecilia. She would suit him very well, poor man, and no one can tell what may come about yet. But do not look so pale, my dear, for I am sure you have nothing to reproach yourself with."

Dora was silent, and availed herself of the first opportunity to leave the room.

Matters now stood upon a very different footing between Miss Beauford and herself from what they had done when she first came to Carlington. Her gentle sweetness had gradually stolen upon the old lady's affections, while her dignity of character commanded a respect very different from the feelings with which she had been accustomed to regard "young people" in general. And since the trials of Dora's life had so crushed her buoyant spirit, her aunt's feelings for her had become increasingly tender, and even energetic. In all she undertook, she now busied herself as much in seeking the gratification of Dora's every wish, as she had once done in endeavoring to conform her niece to her ideas of a model young lady. Wholly unable,

however, to understand Dora's inner nature, it not unfrequently happened that some of her remarks grated sorely upon her niece's feelings; but these painful touches were borne with so much sweetness, and atoned for, when perceived, with such real concern, that they never interrupted the harmony existing between them.

In a few days they went to Ballyrowan. Dora had not visited it since the time of Harris's warning, and many were the recollections that now crowded upon her mind. It was the evening of the day after her arrival—the 10th of September. On the following day, Lady Fitzgerald had said they would sail from Havre, and soon afterwards Dora hoped to see them. She had been for some time alone in her room, and it was now midnight, as still she sat at the window, wrapped in thoughts of the past and visions of the future. It was strange to be here, in a daughter's place, waiting to welcome those so dear to her, to a home that she felt would ere long be her own.

Her daily reading of the Bible was gradually, through the Divine teaching promised to all who ask it, clearing her mind of the mists of darkness and error, and she now saw that it was a human authority alone which had forbidden the union of those whom God had joined in spirit.

While she was gratefully contrasting her last visit to Ballyrowan with the present, the clock in the old tower struck one. Surprised at the lateness of the hour, she rose to retire to rest, when a shriek, wild, unearthly, and prolonged, rang upon her ear, and froze her blood with horror. She hastened to the window, and in the clear moonlight saw the figure of a woman seated on the steps of a balcony which ran along the front of the room she occupied, and of Cecilia's, which was next to it, and descended thence to a flower-garden on the lawn. The back of the figure was turned towards her; but she appeared to be a tall woman, and was dressed in a long blue mantle, with a hood which covered her head. Her face was bent on her hands; but while Dora looked, she raised it, and throwing her

arms wildly above her head, uttered again that fearful cry. Dora shuddered as she listened, and tales of her country's superstition rushed upon her mind. She turned to call nurse, who always slept near her. When she resumed her place at the window, the figure was gone.

"Did you hear that cry, nurse?" she said, as the faithful old woman hastened to her side.

"Shure enough I heard it, chora machree; may my ould ears niver hear such another!"

"What is it—surely no mortal voice could utter such a sound?"

"Thrue for ye, darlint, more be token, id's the banshee that has hunted the house iver sin' the Fitzgeralds—God bless thim every one!—came into Ireland wid St. Patrick; and sore I fear me, alanna, that it bodes no good."

"Does it not foretell the death of some member of the family?" inquired Dora in a low tone.

"Shure people say so, dear, but don't be castin' down yer heart that way; but inyhow, id's a sore pity iv inythin' goes wrong wid Miss Cecilia, the darlint, and her so young and beautiful. Id's afore her window she cried,—id's there I saw her, shure enough, makin' her ullalloo. Bud she's gone now; so to yer rest, darlint, an' yer ould nurse will sit by the fire here and watch yer sleep, my blissed child."

"No, nurse, you must go to bed too; I am not afraid to be alone, and I know you are near me."

"The blessin' of Heaven be about ye, thin, dear. I'll be lavin' the dure open, an' I'll hear ye if ye move. Shure, perhaps, nothin' 'll come iv id afther all; so be kapin' up yer heart, mavourneen."

Dora's thoughts dwelt long on the strange occurrence of the night ere she could sleep. She had heard of this banshee before. The last time she had appeared was when Cecilia's father was dying, and then she had come, she remembered, three times, at some intervals of time, and had wailed in the same strange

manner before his window. She almost reproached herself when she felt how naturally, on the first boding of evil, her thoughts had gone to Sir Eustace, as if he alone could be in danger; but when the sudden agony of apprehension for him had passed, the fear for Cecilia awoke a deep and heart-felt sorrow. She had felt secure in the hope of her recovery, and had fondly anticipated the sweet task of uniting with Lady Fitzgerald in soothing her grief, and winning her gradually from the remembrance of her wrongs. And now, had the blight, indeed, fallen so heavily—had the machinations of the wretched Romilli accomplished the destruction of his victim? Images of horror arose before her mind. Sometimes she fancied the truth had been revealed to Cecilia, and she had sunk under it. Again, she thought the Count had perhaps succeeded in carrying her away from her home. Feverish and ill, she tossed till morning on a restless pillow, and then rising, she sought in the open air the refreshment that had been denied her in sleep.

"How wretchedly ill you look! my dear," said Miss Beauford, when they met in the breakfast-room; "but, to be sure, it is not to be wondered at; for how can you be well, if you allow yourself so little time for rest? I am sure it could not be after four this morning, when I heard you in the music-room; and really, my love, even your beautiful voice, at such an hour, sounded quite unearthly, as it swept along the old corridors. I would have come to beg you to lie down for a little, but a strange feeling took possession of me, and I could not. Not that I am more timid than other people; but still, there are mysterious stories told of this old place, and I quite felt as if there was a sort of spell cast over me—you could not have felt it, or you would not have wandered about in the dark in such a manner."

Dora had silently suffered the venerable lady to finish her narrative uninterruptedly, hanging with breathless interest on every syllable.

"I have not been in the music-room this morning, aunt," she said, when she had ceased.

"Not in the music-room!" exclaimed Miss Beauford, turning pale; "then who could it have been? No one else in the house knows how to touch the organ, and I think it must have been it that accompanied the beautiful voice I heard. Surely you have not been smitten with these wonders we hear so much of now-a-days, and become a somnambulist, as they call it? But, to tell you the truth, my love, I did not think the voice sounded like yours, only I thought the tone might be changed in coming through all those odd-shaped rooms and galleries. But had you not better order inquiries to be made?"

During part of this dialogue, the white-headed butler, who had spent his whole life in the service of the Fitzgeralds, had been an attentive listener, as he busied himself about the breakfast table.

"Laste said is soonest minded, me lady," said he at last. "There was more in the house than yer ladyship that heard that same music this blissed mornin'—the saints betune us an' harm! —but id's betther not to be spakin' much iv id. Shure id's for no good to the house iv Fitzgerald that same is heard."

"Has it been heard before, O'Gorman?" inquired Dora.

"It has, plase yer ladyship; the mornin' that ould Sir Lewis, the grandfather iv Sir Eustace, died—Heaven rest his soul!— meself an' Judy heard it as plain as iver ye heard the mass; an' 'up,' says Judy to me, 'Patrick, an' go see is his lardship in health, for me mind misgives me.' She was always a mighty sinsible woman—by yer lave; so I up an' wint to Sir Lewis's dure, an' knocked, an' knocked, and no answer; so I opened the dure, an' there's Sir Lewis, shure enough, on the flure, jist forninst me, lyin' in a fit; an' he died next mornin'. Bud all may go well yit; only I wish we'd good news from furrin parts. Id was heard, too, they said, whin the last Sir Lewis died, bud I was in France at the same time wid Sir Eustace. Howsomever, they say id always attinds the family—bud the saints have a care iv us!—what am I sayin'! Shure id's betther to be houldin' yer whist whin things like these are abroad."

So saying, as if determined to guard against the possibility of being tempted again to speak, he hastily left the room.

A few days after this time, Dora received from Lady Fitzgerald the news of Count Romilli's attempt to carry off Cecilia, and its sad results. She told her also that Cecilia at present appeared to shrink from returning to Ballyrowan, but begged her to await them there, as they would seize the first moment of willingness on her part to return, and might arrive before letters could reach her.

Two or three weeks passed quietly, without any event to mark their progress save the accounts from time to time received from Normandy, and these each time became more sad. Her sorrow for Cecilia was now the only cloud that darkened Dora's returning peace. Long worn in mind and body, it was a new thing for her to look for happiness on earth; and when she first, through the mists of doubt and error, began to see the true light which shines but to bless—when she dared to hope that an eternity of peace was secured to her by the love of Christ, without the weary and uncertain toil of self-inflicted sufferings, and works ever too imperfect to satisfy the conscience—when she ventured, too, to hope that He, who is the former of all human ties, did not require her to sever the dearest of all, her soul quivered with a happiness so intense, that she felt the quiet of her present life was mercifully given to enable her to sustain it.

Her strength was now gradually reviving, and permitted her to resume the long solitary walks in which she so much delighted. To these Miss Beauford no longer objected; but Dora yielded to what she knew were the good lady's feelings, by generally making nurse her companion, if her walks were more distant or later than usual. On one occasion, however, she was alone in a wood at some distance from the house, and, tempted by the lingering beauty of autumn, she prolonged her walk until the darkness of night threatened to overtake her. Anxious on her aunt's account to hasten home, she turned into *what* appeared to be a short way to the house, and had not

proceeded far ere she got completely entangled in the labyrinths of the wood. She wandered on for some time equally unable to return to the point from which she had diverged, and to find any other way to Ballyrowan. At last she discovered a path where the trees were not quite so close, and after pursuing it for some time, found that it led her to the brow of an abrupt declivity, at the foot of which stood the old church of Ballyrowan, embosomed in trees. Near it stood a Gothic building, which had been from time immemorial the burying place of the Fitzgeralds. Dora knew the path home from the church, and immediately began to descend the hill towards it. Emerging from a little thicket of trees that bordered the church-yard, she came directly in front of the building. The moonlight was shining on the porch, and clearly defined in its beams sat the same strange figure she had seen in the balcony. A cold dew burst from every pore. The figure sat in the path she must tread, or go a circuit of several miles at this late hour. She paused for one moment only, not to hesitate, but to commend herself to the protection of God, and then walked resolutely forward. As she approached, the figure rose, and throwing up her arms in the manner of the Irish women when singing the dirge or funeral lament, uttered that fearful cry which Dora remembered but too well; and, gliding before her along the path for a few yards, disappeared at the entrance of the wood.

Dora's limbs trembled as she pursued her swift way home. She felt she had no cause to fear—that the Power in whom she confided would preserve her from danger; yet a thrill of horror she could not repress pervaded her frame, and attested the weakness which her resolute spirit was not altogether able to overcome. As she approached the house, she gladly welcomed the lights that gleamed from its windows; but the sudden reaction, when she entered the warm and cheerful drawing-room, was almost too much for her, and with difficulty she preserved herself from fainting. Miss Beauford, in alarm, hastened to her side, and a few moments sufficed to restore her; but as soon as

she was able to observe it, she was struck by a look of horror and distress in the venerable lady's face much beyond what Dora's lateness or slight illness could have occasioned even in her.

"What is the matter, dear aunt? are you ill?" she inquired anxiously, taking Miss Beauford's hand, which she found to be cold and trembling. "What has happened?"

"Nothing, my love, nothing," said she. "Go to your room, and let nurse change your dress, which I am sure must be quite wet with dew, and get you something warm before dinner, or you will be sure to take cold."

"No, indeed, dear aunt, I am in no danger—the night is so mild; but I will do as you wish. Only first tell me what is the matter with you; for I am quite sure you are either ill, or that something dreadful has happened."

"I am not ill, my love; and, to be sure, people should never be afraid when in the way of their duty, for a kind Providence watches over us; so do not be the least afraid, my dear, that I will urge you to leave Ballyrowan for my sake. You are doing your duty to your poor cousin and her family, and I am sure I would be the last to dissuade you; for of course you are the proper person to act when anything of this sort is required, and I shall always be happy to chaperon you, though I trust you will not need a chaperon long; and I would really have you think of what I say, my dear, that it might be much better to have the marriage over before the winter, for Carlington would be very dreary for you, and yet it would not be quite the thing for you to be always here; and I am sure you have done all that any one could think was required, by waiting three months after poor Lord Belmont's affair, and it would be that length of time at any rate before a proper *trousseau* could be got ready. But, dear me, I beg your pardon, my love, how very stupid of me to be reviving that subject! though I always said you distressed yourself far too much about that unlucky business. He was a *fine young* man, to be sure, but then no one could help it; and

I am sure neither you nor any but *one* could have any reflections. But do stand near the fire, my dear; your dress really feels quite damp. I think you should have something warmer now that it is so late in the year."

Dora, who knew by experience that breaking her aunt's chain of ideas only diffused them, quietly, though at heart not very patiently, waited for a pause, and then said—

"We will talk over all these matters another time, dear aunt; but now, do tell me what has happened, and why you think I would suppose you wanted to leave Ballyrowan."

"Happened! why, my love, I am sure I do not mean to complain, for I assure you the time we have spent here has been very agreeable to me. At my time of life one likes to be quiet; not that I object to a little innocent amusement, and I like to see young people happy in a proper way; but that is very different from never knowing, when one rises in the morning, what commotions are to take place before night; and one might certainly change for the worse, there is no doubt of that. It is bad enough to be awoke with unearthly music, or to meet with things even more dreadful; but it is worse still to be in danger, every time one walks up a staircase, of being snatched through the wall, no one knows where. Not but what I trust such things are all over now; but then, you know, it takes some time before one can forget them; and I am sure, if scenes like to-night's go on, I shall soon have no nerves at all; not that I approve of so much work being made about nerves—there were no such things in my day—but"——

"Do tell me, dear aunt," said Dora, seizing at all hazards the moment of allusion to a tale which she feared she was otherwise not destined to hear; "do tell me *what* you have seen—what has alarmed you?"

But Dora's anxiety must have waited longer still for satisfaction, had not nurse—at all times a privileged person—at that instant entered the room, to inquire "How was her ladyship, Miss Beauford; an' would her lady 'come an' git dressed?' for

shure id's both cowld an' wearied, this blissed night, ye are, dear."

"What has happened, nurse?" inquired Dora, earnestly; "has Miss Beauford been ill?"

"Small blame to her if she was, mavourneen; id's not ivery one of poor mortials like us—by yer lave, ma'am dear, for evenin' meself in the same breath wid yees—that can stand the like, though id's safe, shure enough, they be that puts their trust in the Almighty. But I'll be tellin' ye, dear, how id was, an' sore I fear there's harm in id. Miss Beauford had called me, ma'am agrah, to bid me have somethin' warm for yees, dear, aginst yer comin' in; an' so I was jist standin' foreninst her ladyship whin the wildest ullalloo that iver I hear rose jist as iv id was at our very ear. The window-curtains war open, an' the blinds, an' I was foreninst the window, an' me two eyes seen id shure enough, darlint; the face iv *her* (lowering her voice to a whisper), that is the banshee, alanna, lukin' in at the winder, an' id came over me heart, an' I cried 'Wirristhru!' out loud, afore I had time to gather meself up, an' her ladyship turned round an' seen the same; so id tuk howld iv her heart intirely, an' she fell into the astericks, and the wirrasthru an' the balloo kem an the top of ache oder wid her, an' I hears, be good look, O'Gorman passin' the dure in that minute iv time, an' I called him to bring a dhrop iv cardial to kape her ladyship's heart; an' wid that"——

The next portion of nurse's tale was not destined to be known, for at that moment a confused noise of voices and footsteps was heard in the hall, and the door opening, O'Gorman entered, followed by a crowd of servants weeping and lamenting, while the elder and more staid amongst them strove, but in vain, to keep some degree of order.

"Shure id's not me fault, ma'am dear," said O'Gorman to Dora; "bud id's a hundred years ould they'd be afore they'd larn manners; an' so I've been afther tellin' them id's no manners to rush into the ladies' prisence after this fashion."

But his exhortations were utterly thrown away.

"Ochone, ochone!" exclaimed the old housekeeper—"an' was id for this I was spared? an' are me ould eyes too see harm come to the child I've nursed on my knees, ay, many an' many a time? Oh, me malison rest an thim that 'ud harm her! an ill end may they see!"

"Bud who knows who id is?" said Kathleen, who was amongst the crowd; "shure, the young lady—God bless her!—isn't in id at all; an' id's iny connixion, as I've heard, and mayn't be one iv the family."

"Thrue for ye, Kathleen, girl," said O'Gorman; "she's more sinse nor any iv us; so go down agin, there's good girls, an' id's twenty aves an' paters an' Hail Mary's we'll say before we sleep, ache one iv us, to hould harm away."

"But what have you seen?" inquired Dora, at last, availing herself of the first moment when she had a chance of being heard.

"We've seen the banshee, ma'am dear," said O'Gorman, in a whisper; but, low as it was, the ominous sound was heard by the rest of the party, and their cries and lamentations redoubled.

"We were sittin', ma'am agrah," said O'Gorman, drawing near Dora, and speaking in a whisper, "at our tay—savin' yer presence—whin, jist foreninst the window, we heard all iv us an ullalloo; loud an' wild id rose an the wind, an' at first was a great way off, but it came nearer; an' whin we wint to the window, shure *she's* sittin' foreninst the hall-dure on the steps. An' as we lookit, she threw up her arms, an' gev the ullalloo agin, quite loud an' clear; an' wid that the girls an' boys ran in out iv the sarvants' hall, cryin' they'd seen the banshee, an' id was nothin' 'ud sarve thim but straight up to yerself, ma'am dear, an' I followed to try 'ud they be peaceable, the crathurs; for shure, as I tell thim—the saints have a care iv us!—id's a dolefu' sound, an' shure there's none can tell, as Kathleen says, but id may be some distant connixion, an' none iv the family at all. So go your ways, girls, an' be kapin' quiet wid yees. To be at your aves an' paters 'ud be wiser than all this ullabaloo."

He succeeded at last in restoring them to some degree of composure; but their lamentations were hardly quieted when their feelings were turned into a different channel by the sound of wheels in the avenue. They rapidly approached the door. O'Gorman flew to the hall, and had just time to withdraw the bolts and fling the door wide open, when the carriage stopped.

"The saints be praised!" exclaimed the old man, as Sir Eustace alighted—"they are come at last!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

"But we! we return! we return no more!
The heart's young dreams, when their spring is o'er;
The love it hath poured so freely forth—
The boundless trust in ideal worth;
The faith in affection, deep, fond, yet vain;—
These are the lost that return not again!"

MRS. HEMANS.

"Alone I shall not linger,
When the days of hope are past,
To watch the fall of leaf by leaf,
To wait the rushing blast."

NIGHTINGALE'S DEATH SONG.

DORA forgot everything for a few moments in the rapture of re-union; but when the little party entered the drawing-room, and the full blaze of light fell upon Cecilia, she was startled by her ethereal beauty. The exquisitely-chiselled features were perfectly colorless; and, as Lady Fitzgerald removed her bonnet, the golden ringlets, that fell in heavy masses, looked like a halo of glory around her. The trouble had passed from her pure calm brow, and a light that was not of this world beamed *in her eye.* "My home!" she murmured softly to herself, while

her earnest gaze rested on each familiar object, "do I indeed see you once more?"

For some days after their return to Ballyrowan, all was bright and happy. Cecilia revived so much as almost to deceive the anxious love that watched over her into the hope that she would recover. Though October was now far advanced, the weather was so mild, that she was not confined to the house, and new vigor seemed to inspire her as she revisited her childhood's haunts, and returned in thought to the happy days of her early life. She alone was not deceived.

"Do not wish me to recover," she said, one day, when Dora had brought her some favorite wild-flowers from a distant wood, and, as she gave them, fondly expressed the hope that ere long they would wander thus together. "Dear, unutterably dear, is my earthly home; there is not a tree or flower that is not blended with happy memories, and utters not a response to the love with which I regard them. And dearer far are those who have made my Eden the paradise it is." She paused a little, and her countenance assumed the dreamy impression it after wore, as if she had forgotten the presence of those around her, and her spirit was far away, wrapt in its own visions—but at this time she quickly aroused herself. "I was not driven from my paradise—I forsook it; and now that, by the mercy of my Saviour, I am permitted to behold it again, it is as a spirit that has been long departed, would revisit its earthly haunts—I am in it, as no longer of it. On that fearful morning which cut the cord of my earthly existence, the bitterness of death came. It is past now—life is old with me, while yet in its spring-tide. Its hopes are all blighted—its interests all dead. Do not then wish that I should be thrown back to stem the billows that for me can have no earthly shore; but rather rejoice, that through Him who died for me, this broken heart will have rest at last." She paused for a moment, then passionately exclaimed, "Oh Dora, may you never know what it is to have launched your whole existence on the faith of one human being, and find you

have loved an illusion, and for that around which all your hopes have twined, there is but a dreary blank in earth and heaven."

For some time both were silent. Cecilia had relapsed into her dreamy abstraction, and Dora was too much moved to speak.

"God is there, dear Cecilia," said she, at last; "though every human being were false, He cannot fail us."

"Yes," said Cecilia, with sudden animation, "God is there, and I, sinful and erring as I am, may dare to trust Him; now I *know* in whom I have believed."

They both were silent—each heart too full of its own thoughts for speech. At last Dora, who had been sitting on a low stool at the foot of Cecilia's couch, pressing the hand she held to her lips, gently said, "Dear Cecilia, can you forgive him?"

Cecilia turned her eyes upon her cousin's face. A pure light beamed in their gaze—"I do forgive him," she said solemnly, "as I hope I am forgiven. At first I could not, I did not try. When I thought of the young bright life he had destroyed—of the hopes he had blighted; then I hated him with a deadly hatred, and burned to avenge the ruin he had wrought. Ah, Dora, that was the midnight of my soul! I think my reason was shaken, for visions of my home and of my early happy life used to haunt me, till I often could hardly distinguish the present from the past; and dreamed I was a child again in the woods of Ballyrowan. Suddenly *his* eyes would gleam upon me from the shade, and then I would start back into remembrance—I would know that all was lost, and who had lured me from my Eden. At such moments, Dora, I was a murderess. The air I breathed was turned to poison. I shuddered at myself. Ah, Dora, little did I, who had never known one angry or bitter feeling in my happy home, imagine what was in my heart! One day my mother read to me the story of the 'Prodigal Son;' she left me when she had done, and I lay thinking of the words—'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.'"

Cecilia paused—tears filled her eyes, and for some time she

was silent. At last she said softly, "God be praised for His mercy! I then understood, for the first time, that the Lord Jesus came to save sinners, even such as I. Filled with a new hope, I lay wrapt in thought of the wonderful love that could thus stoop to beings so vile! At last I fell asleep. I dreamed that I was in a place of heavenly beauty—all was calm and peaceful—the clear luminous air did not move the trees under whose shade I rested, and no sound broke the perfect silence that reigned around. Near where I lay was a gate, through whose open bars I could see the region without. Suddenly the quiet was broken by sounds of strife, and I saw men without the gate engaged in mortal combat. They all disappeared in a few moments but one, who was left bleeding at the gate: it was Count Romilli. I then heard a voice near me say, 'Shall we take him in—he is mortally wounded?' 'No,' replied another voice; 'no one has prayed for him.' At that moment he turned his eyes on me with a look of reproach, and I awoke. 'No one has prayed for him?'—the words had pierced my heart, and I prayed for his salvation. From that hour the bitterness was gone from my heart. There is a strange deep joy in the feeling that I may call down blessings on his head, who has made me desolate."

She ceased, and was long silent. At last she said, as if almost unconscious that any one was present, "In heaven we may meet, and then—forgiven, changed—my love will be no delusion."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"And Thou didst die for me, O Son of God!
By Thee the throbbing flesh of man was worn,
Thy naked feet the thorns of sorrow trod,
And tempests beat Thy houseless head forlorn!
Thou! who wert wont to stand
Alone at God's right hand
Before the ages were—
Th' Eternal eldest born."

MILMAN.

A SUCCESSION of storms towards the close of autumn ushered in an early but not severe winter. Cecilia's little excursions were given up, and she was confined entirely to the house. Surrounded by her books and flowers, and in the constant society of those so dear to her, she but slightly felt the deprivation, while her strength revived so much, that but for her own steadfast conviction, all around her would have believed her recovering.

"You look pale to-day, Dora," said Lady Fitzgerald, as she entered Cecilia's sitting-room one bright day, early in December; "I wish you would walk or ride this afternoon; Cecilia and I will not tire together."

Cecilia's soft smile responded as she urged her mother's entreaties, and Dora consented.

Her old buoyancy of spirit returned as she bounded over the green slopes of Ballyrowan. And when, emerging from a narrow valley, they came upon the sea-shore, and rode along the smooth sands, with the sparkling tide at their feet, the *declining* sun of the short winter day lighting up every object

with its gorgeous hues, she gave herself up to the enjoyment of the present, with an entire oblivion of the past or future. They had ridden for some time in silence, only broken by an occasional remark, when Sir Eustace at last said—

"I need not ask you, Dora, if you have kept your promise of reading the Bible, since we parted. I see in the new-born freedom of your mind that you have both read and believe in it."

"I have read it," replied Dora; "but why do you say 'believe in it'? I believed the Bible to be true whilst I was ignorant, or nearly so, of its contents."

"And you may, and do, believe this to be a vessel," said Sir Eustace, pointing to a fishing-boat, with its sails full set, that was putting out to sea, "but one that you neither need nor wish to sail in. To *believe in* the Bible, or rather in God, of whom it testifies, is to launch our whole souls upon His entire truth, and fearlessly venture upon it on the ocean of eternity—that eternity to which we are now progressing, and of which this life forms a portion."

"I think I understand you," said Dora. "I do thus believe in the Bible, but not entirely yet; at least, I do not fully understand it. I have been so long accustomed to look to Father Adrien, not only to explain to me the meaning of all I heard and read, but to tell me what I must believe, that I tremble even to think without a guide." She paused a moment, then added—"You guide me in nearly everything; but there are some points on which your opinions are so different from all I hold sacred, that I tremble to adopt them."

"I would not have you do so, until persuaded of their truth," said Sir Eustace. "The Church of Rome alone, though falsely, promises an infallible guide. For us there is no human teacher who may not fail;—but on what subject do I dissent from what you still believe to be true?"

"On one point chiefly," said Dora, thoughtfully; "yet that is a vital one. The name of the Redeemer was ever on Father

Adrien's lips. His person was adored; His sacraments worshipped; each act of His life commemorated. He was the grand idea of our religion; and though I now see that idolatry and self-righteousness defiled that apparently exalted adoration, yet it appears to me, that if it be error to worship him falsely, it is error more fatal not to worship Him at all."

She ceased, and both for some time continued silent. Dora's mind appeared full of thoughts to which she could not easily give utterance. At last she said, half hesitatingly—"Forgive me, Eustace; perhaps I am wrong. But your religion appears to me better fitted for good and pure beings, who have only to believe God's law, and keep it, than for sinners such as we."

"Do you mean *my* religion, Dora, or that of the Protestant Church in general?" inquired Sir Eustace.

"I know the Protestant religion only through you," she replied. "But this is the question to which I long for an answer—'What place do you give to the Lord Jesus Christ?'"

Sir Eustace changed color. They had been riding for some time along the brow of a rocky promontory; and on reaching, a few minutes before, a little platform half encircled by trees, that commanded an extensive view of the inland country, they had dismounted, and now were resting in the shade. Close to where they sat, a precipitous bank descended abruptly a distance of many hundred feet to the plain below. A weeping birch grew in a cleft of the rock, and hung its branches over the gulf. Sir Eustace pointed to the tree—"We stand on the brink of the precipice," he said, "and He is the tree to which we cling."

Dora answered only by a look; but it told that she knew what it was to cling to that sole hope, and was satisfied.

"You must look to a higher than any human teacher for instruction in truth, dear Dora," continued Sir Eustace, after a short pause. "I am but learning it. I long believed that, being placed in a salvable state by the death of Christ, man *could live* uprightly, and merit eternal happiness. I have

learned that the fairest actions and purest feelings are sinful, if they spring not from love to God; and, that as certainly as we are redeemed by the Lord Jesus, we must be renovated by His Spirit; but these are lessons taught by God alone. Seek His teaching, dear Dora, and you must—you shall find it."

They sat for a long time silent. At last, taking Dora's hand, Sir Eustace gently said, "Do you still believe that God forbids our union?"

She raised her eyes to his as she softly answered—"No."

Low-breathed as was the word, it fell clear and full upon the ear of Sir Eustace.

"Well, really, Dora, my love, I congratulate you," said Miss Beauford, as she entered the breakfast-room next morning, where she found Dora alone. "I am very glad you have taken my advice, and quite rejoiced that the wedding is to take place so soon. I am sure no one wishes your happiness more sincerely than I do," kissing Dora's cheek affectionately as she spoke, and applying for a moment her embroidered handkerchief to her eyes; "and happy you will be, I have no doubt, with Sir Eustace, who I always said was just the person for you; a man of mature judgment and good sense—a much better guide for a young person than poor Lord Belmont, with all his amiability. And really, my love, you need a protector. I am no longer so young as I have been, and can neither guard you nor myself from all these secret plots and machinations—not that I think we have reason to apprehend anything now, at least I hope not; and surely, after your marriage, Mr. Mowbray will be satisfied to let matters alone. But I must say, my love, I am very happy indeed, to see that you sometimes read your Bible now; and Sir Eustace will be very well able to explain it to you, I doubt not, much better than I could, though I was well instructed in my youth. But then, my dear, there is the *trousseau;* and this season is the worst in the world for getting anything new; besides that, you would not like to leave your cousin, poor thing, and, indeed, it would not be kind, in her present state of

health, though I trust she is recovering; and I can plainly see that Lady Fitzgerald hopes so too, though she is afraid to be too confident; and, to be sure, for some time there must be great cause of anxiety, and it is very natural that your aunt should not like to part with you, and that you should feel anxious at a distance; but what is to be done? I am sure I do not know if I could be of any use. I am sure—but then"——

"—Oh, if you would choose for me, dear aunt," said Dora, who readily comprehended that, of all things, such a commission would give Miss Beauford the greatest pleasure—"I should be quite pleased with all you got. We could have patterns sent here from London or Paris."

"I protest that is an excellent idea, my love," said Miss Beauford, brightening up. "But the patterns would never do. One cannot form a proper judgment of how a dress looks; besides, there are jewels to be selected, and milliners to be consulted, and a great variety of things to be arranged. But the Dowager Lady Devereux—she was one of my earliest friends, you know, my dear; her mother and mine, too, were nearly related, and were presented at the same time, at the court of his most gracious Majesty, George III.; and an anecdote is still preserved in both families of an incident that took place on that occasion. My mother was very fair; Lady St. Aubyn, the mother of my friend, was equally beautiful; indeed, some people thought still more so, though in general my mother was more admired. But Lady St. Aubyn was very dark, and as they entered together, a celebrated foreigner, the Duc de ——, who was present, remarked to those who stood near him, 'I have often heard of the highly-favored British Isles, but I knew not till now that the luminaries of night and day arose upon upon them together.' But, as I was saying, my love, Lady Devereux has often urged me during the last few years to visit her; I will go now, and then I can arrange all your matters, *and have time* and opportunity for making the best selection."

Full of delight in the mission intrusted to her, Miss Beauford set out for London a few days after this time. Dora's marriage was appointed to take place early in January.

Time flew swiftly and tranquilly on, with little to mark its progress, save the weekly reception of letters from Miss Beauford, filled with such vivid descriptions of morning and evening dresses, robes, caps, jewels, and laces, as would have formed an invaluable contribution to *La Belle Assemblèe.*

One night, towards the close of December, the little party were assembled as usual. It was brilliant moonlight, the curtains had been withdrawn, and the lamps put out that they might enjoy its beauty. Cecilia's couch was drawn near the window, where she could see the hills and woods slumbering in the peaceful light, and the ocean sparkling near the shore in a flood of silvery radiance, while the far abyss of its waters was veiled in darkness.

"Sing to me, Dora," said Cecilia, after a long silence. "Sing me one of my own land's melodies, that I loved in days gone by."

Dora sung Moore's beautiful melody—"Not more welcome." Cecilia listened with a tranquil smile; but gradually her look became abstracted, and her features assumed the dreamy expression they so often wore.

"Sweet voice of comfort!" she murmured, when the song had ceased. "Voice of forgiveness and peace: yes, it has broken my sleep of sorrow. Mourn not, my mother, that it wakes me to a brighter day."

"Say not so, my child," said Lady Fitzgerald, fondly kissing her calm pure brow; "you will live for my sake. God has restored you to my prayers and you will be content to stay."

"Yes; for your sake, dearest of earthly friends, I could be content to stay in a world that for me has no future of hope; but it may not be—I hear the voice that calls me, and I may not linger. Mourn not, for no earthly spring could bloom again for me." She paused, and her eyes dreamily wandered

over the scene before her. "The past, the past alone is mine, and memory's treasures I will carry with me where I go. Yet —but do not weep, mother," for a tear she could not restrain fell from Lady Fitzgerald's eye upon Cecilia's forehead; "it will not be soon; and I am happy with you now, at rest in my sweet home."

At this moment a sudden trampling of horses broke the stillness of the night, and a party of armed men emerging from the shade into the clear moonlight, rode up the avenue.

Sir Eustace left the room to inquire their purpose, and the next instant a loud knocking resounded on the door, and their voices were heard fiercely demanding admittance.

From the window where they sat, Lady Fitzgerald and her terrified companions could hear every word uttered by the intruders, though the answers from the speakers within the house could not be distinguished.

One who appeared to be the leader of the party demanded admittance in virtue of the warrant he read. A short discussion took place in the hall, and, to the astonishment of the anxious listeners above, the bolts were withdrawn, and several of the men entered the house.

Dreading she knew not what, Dora went to the hall, while Lady Fitzgerald remained with Cecilia. A crowd of servants was collected, in front of whom stood Sir Eustace. As Dora entered, a stern-looking man advanced, and, pulling forth a paper, read aloud a warrant for the seizure of the body of Sir Eustace Fitzgerald, charged with the murder of the Conte di Romilli. Horror-stricken, yet bewildered, Dora pressed forward; but ere she reached Sir Eustace, the man who held the warrant was levelled to the ground by a well-aimed blow of O'Gorman's fist. "Come on wid yees," he exclaimed, prostrating another by the side of his fallen comrade; "come on wid yer talk, an' taste the wilcome we'll be afther givin' to thim that 'ud insult his honor—God bless him!—in the hálls iv his ancesthors."

Alarmed by the fate of their leaders, the officials who had

been pressing into the hall, now retreated, as loud hurrahs from the rest of the servants applauded O'Gorman's prowess, accompanied by exclamations of "Long live his honor!"—"Botheration to his inimies!"—"Bad cess to the dogs that 'ud move their tongues foreninst him!" For some minutes Sir Eustace vainly tried to make himself heard, but with an authoritative motion of his hand at last stilling the tumult—"Hush, my friends," he said; "do not think me insensible to your attachment; but it becomes us to set an example of submission to the laws of our country; let this matter, therefore, be inquired into. It can cause but a temporary annoyance." The clamors sunk into murmurs of "God bless him!"—"That's always the way wid him!"—"White is the sowl in his body!"—and Sir Eustace, turning to the officer, who had now risen from the ground, demanded the warrant which authorized his apprehension.

The man sulkily presented it. It contained merely a statement of the crime with which Sir Eustace was charged, and authority to convey his person to London, there to await his trial. Sir Eustace at once saw that it was full and regular in all respects; and, turning to O'Gorman, he ordered his carriage, whilst he supported Dora back to the room they had left. She had stood for some minutes in a half stupor, seeing and hearing, yet hardly comprehending, all that went on around her. Sir Eustace's touch aroused her, as he would have led her to his mother, and, starting, she exclaimed, "You will not go?"

Sir Eustace stopped. "Dora," he said, gently, "be strong. I trust to you to support my mother and Cecilia. A short imprisonment must be all I have to dread, and I look to you to lessen the anxiety I must feel in separation at such a crisis from those I would protect."

Ere he had ceased, Dora's self-possession was restored; and though her cheek was still deadly pale, her voice faltered not as she replied—"Trust me, Eustace; and by the help of that God to whom I commit you, I will not fail in this hour of need."

As Sir Eustace was about to enter the drawing-room, he was

stopped by the officer who held the warrant—"You must not go without a guard, sir."

"I will return in a few minutes," said Sir Eustace. "A lady is ill in this room, whom any shock may seriously injure."

"I cannot help that, sir; there may be a dozen different entrances to this room for aught I know; and I've not come so far to lose my pains, and let the bird escape after all."

"Silence, fellow!" said Sir Eustace, sternly; "confine your speech to the duties of your office."

The man muttered something, but felt the power of a superior mind, and was afraid to give further vent to his insolence.

"Will you prepare my mother to see me thus guarded, and bring her to another room?" said Sir Eustace, in a low voice, to Dora. She obeyed; and in a few moments more, Lady Fitzgerald and Dora had received Sir Eustace's farewell, and seen him, with manacled arms, placed between two ruffians, driven from his home—it might be to enter it no more.

"Courage, dearest Dora," he whispered, as they parted. "Trust in God, be strong, and we shall meet ere long in peace."

She strove to catch the hope his words conveyed, and, with calm brow and tearless eye, joined Lady Fitzgerald in calming Cecilia's anxiety by the assurance that Sir Eustace had been called to London upon business of importance, which they trusted would only detain him a short time.

But night came with its silence and solitude—night came, and found Lady Fitzgerald in mute supplication before the throne of mercy for deliverance from this calamity—the heaviest that had ever threatened her path;—night came, and found Dora's young spirit again prostrate in the dust; the voice of despairing supplication arising from her heart, while tears of more bitter anguish than her sorrowful life had ever known, stood horror-frozen upon her cheek;—night came, and the pale moon looked down on a peaceful couch, where Cecilia slept the calm sleep of infancy, all unwitting of the new clouds that were gathering on *her horizon.*

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Is there a power that can sustain and cheer
The captive chieftain, by a tyrant's doom
Forced to descend into his destined tomb—
A dungeon dark! where he must waste the year,
And lie cut off from all his heart holds dear?"

WORDSWORTH.

THE snows and storms of winter had passed, and the bright spring-time returned. The joyous sunbeams sparkled on the golden sands of Carlington, and lighted the green woods of Ballyrowan; but all it shone upon was lonely and deserted. Its rays faintly glimmered through the prison-bars of Newgate, and there it found those on whom it was wont to smile.

Two persons were in that cell when the sunbeams of the April evening fell aslant its dingy floor. One sat on a stone bench at the upper end of the room. His cheek was haggard, and his noble brow marked by untimely furrows, while his dark hair was tinged with the silver hue that care, not age, had brought; but the same high bearing that in former days had marked every look and gesture was there unchanged—the undaunted strength of soul still spoke in the firm lines of the mouth, and the same calm resolve shone in the luminous eye.

Near him, on a low seat, her hands clasped listlessly on her lap, and her eyes fixed on the ground, sat Dora, whom the storm of sorrow had more sadly scathed.

Her wasted form was but the shadow of its former self, and a

death-like pallor overspread a countenance, whose only calm was the fixed calm of despair.

"I must go," she said, at last, breaking, as if by a strong effort, the spell-like trance that had bound her. "One effort yet remains; if that be vain"—she threw herself on her knees, and, raising her clasped hands and eyes to heaven, passionately exclaimed—"Take, O God, my life from me!"

Sir Eustace laid his hand gently upon her head. "Is this the spirit which would not fail in the hour of need?"

She started and looked at him vaguely for a moment, as if striving to collect her thoughts. Gradually her features assumed an expression of calm endurance. "Forgive me," she said; "it was a moment of madness. 'Father, not my will, but thine be done.' Yet, oh! if it be possible"—. She rose and stood in silence, her hands pressed on her heart, as if to still its agony.

"We shall not be long apart," said Sir Eustace, gently; "and remember, dearest, even if the worst should come, it cannot sever the soul's union—that is ours for ever."

She raised her lustrous eyes to his, and an expression of intense joy suddenly illumined her features. Sir Eustace bent over her and kissed her pale brow—"God bless thee, beloved, and keep thee now and for ever!"

The prison-door creaked harshly on its hinges, and the jailer announced that it was time to go.

Lady Fitzgerald waited at the gate. Dora threw herself into the most remote corner of the carriage, without her seeming to observe what passed, until the carriage stopped at the gate of a small house on the Edgeware road.

They alighted, and were ushered into a sitting-room, where they waited for some time ere any one appeared. The room was furnished with taste, and, while it lacked the appendages of wealth, there was an air of ease and comfort that betokened its possessor to be far removed from poverty. But Dora marked none of these things. She stood a little way within the

room, her eyes riveted on the door, as if life and death hung on its opening. A footstep at last was heard approaching. The door opened, and a woman in the prime of life entered. Her features were marked by a singular and repulsive beauty, and her bearing was haughty. As her eye rested upon her visitors, a smile curled her lip—a smile fearful to look upon.

"Brunelle!" exclaimed Lady Fitzgerald.

She did not answer the exclamation, but fixed her eyes on Dora, who involuntarily shuddered beneath their gaze. "What would you with me, Miss Mowbray?"

For a moment only had Dora trembled. Calm and self-possessed, she now stood before that evil woman. "I would have justice at your hand, Harris," she replied.

The woman smiled as in scorn. "Come with me, and you shall have it; but you must come alone."

"It needs not," said Lady Fitzgerald; 'I will not leave you, Dora."

"Then your mission is ended," said Harris, coldly, and opening the door for them to go; "alone with you, or unspoken must be my tidings."

"I am ready!" exclaimed Dora, earnestly; "fear not for me, dear aunt. I am well—I can bear anything."

She followed Harris, who led the way up a staircase to a room at some distance from that which they had left. She closed the door, and motioned Dora to a seat; then opening an escritoire at one end of the room, she took thence a paper, and put it into Dora's hand. "Read this," she said, "and tell me if it is what you seek."

Hope filled the heart of the unfortunate girl as she unfolded it. It contained a brief statement of the Count Romilli's attempt to remove Cecilia, concluding with a declaration, concise but circumstantial, that he had been wounded by Sir Eustace —"The Count, finding that all hope of rescuing the Countess was vain, turned towards a tree at a little distance, where his horse was tied, apparently with the purpose of escape. I, fearing to

come forward, continued to watch the whole scene from the window of my lady's room. As Count Romilli reached his horse, Sir Eustace returned from the saloon, whither he had conveyed his sister, and, observing the Count about to escape, he *took deliberate aim* with a pistol in his hand, and fired. The ball entered below the left shoulder, and the Count fell, exclaiming, 'I am slain!'"

As Dora read this fatal perjury, the glow of hope faded from her cheek.

"Will that do?" exclaimed Harris, with a laugh of derision, as she concluded. "Ha! proud minion, will you kneel at my feet?—will you sue at my hand the mercy you denied me? Know that my testimony is all that is required to fill up the chain of evidence; and on the breath of my lips hangs the life or death of your affianced husband. Know that, and kneel, if perhaps I may have pity upon you."

Dora knelt not, she wept not, but rose more free, more calm, than when she had entered that room. "I kneel not to man, but to God alone," she said. "The life I pray for hangs not on your word, but on His will, and to Him I commit it. But beware, Harris, of the wrath of Him you have provoked. Seek a timely forgiveness of your fearful guilt, lest, in the day of His appearing, you be sentenced to a murderer's doom."

The guilty woman's eye quailed beneath that gaze, and the tones of Dora's voice sent the blood freezing to her heart; but she crushed the strivings within her, and laughed in a vain voice—her day of retribution was at hand.

Dora turned to leave the room. Harris by a sudden movement then threw herself between her and the door. "Go!" she exclaimed, passionately, "and rejoice in the work of your hands. Go, and when you see all you loved on earth stricken to the dust, and ruin here and hereafter shall have fallen on the head of their destroyer, then remember that it is your own doing, and rejoice in the work of your hands."

She moved from the door, and would have allowed Dora to pass, but her victim stood spell-bound, rooted to the spot.

"Yes," said Harris, at length, "your work. I would have pitied you but for the scorn that drove me from your presence. Human feelings were not dead within me, and might have been saved had you stretched forth your hand to help me."

"Harris," said Dora—and she fixed on her a gaze whose calm majesty of truth unveiled the wretched sophistry with which the miserable woman strove to beguile herself—"you know I did."

She burst into a fiendish laugh—"I know it! I know it! depart—begone! Is it easier, think you, to curse myself than you?"

She pushed Dora from the room with a violence that nearly precipitated her down the narrow and winding staircase, and, shutting the door, locked it on the inside.

Dora was met in the hall by Lady Fitzgerald, and together they hastened from the miserable abode.

On their return to Belgrave Square, they found Lord Devereux, who, ever since Sir Eustace's capture, had acted as the most kind and energetic of friends, awaiting them in the library.

"I have come to consult with you how we may best arrange a rather difficult matter, my dear Lady Fitzgerald," he said, advancing to meet them as they entered. He was arrested by the sight of Dora's pale and grief-stricken features; for the lofty trust in God which had supported her during her interview with Harris, had yielded for the moment to the utter exhaustion of her frame, and she nearly fainted. Lord Devereux assisted her to a couch, and when he saw her begin to revive, he resumed his conversation with Lady Fitzgerald. "You really must not be cast down, my dear madam," he said; "it is impossible that so foul an act of injustice can be committed under the sanction of English laws. It is true, the evidence is rather stiff, though every one knows it is a mere chain of coincidence; but even should our efforts to procure a legal pardon

fail, all that is necessary will be an appeal to the Crown. So pray do, my dear madam, keep up your spirits, for we have need of all the firmness and composure we can command, to enable us to act with the necessary promptitude."

"I am ready, my kind friend, for anything you propose," said Lady Fitzgerald, calmly. "I do feel a strong assurance that the God to whom I have committed my son's cause will make his innocence manifest." She had drawn near the couch on which Dora, from faintness, still reclined, and leaning on the back of it, she turned her eyes as she concluded, to meet those which were gazing into her face, as if to show them some gleam of hope. A wintry smile greeted her glance, and Dora's face again relapsed into its dreamy look of abstraction. Lady Fitzgerald left her side, and withdrew with Lord Devereux to another part of the room.

"Have you been successful?" he inquired, anxiously.

"No; she is immovable."

Lord Devereux bit his lip.

"Had we known sooner," he muttered, "we might have taken means to nullify her testimony, which, I fear, will be the most difficult of all to manage.—Were you or your daughter witnesses of the whole scene?" he suddenly inquired.

"Alas! no. At the beginning of the conflict, Cecilia was carried insensible into the saloon, and I was there occupied with her until it was over."

"Could we but have got hold of that man!" exclaimed Lord Devereux, impatiently, "all would have been well; but all our efforts to trace him have failed, and the other, you say, is in Australia?"

"Yes; they were the only two servants in whom I had confidence while in Normandy; but they both left me on my return to Ireland. Little did I imagine the cause I should have to regret their loss."

"Well, it is all for the best, I daresay. Do not doubt, my dear madam, but truth will prevail," said Lord Devereux, with

a smile of encouragement that belied the anxiety of his heart. "To-morrow evening, I hope to pay my respects to Sir Eustace in the midst of his family circle. In the mean time, farewell; be strong and hopeful."

"You will report the progress of matters to us to-morrow," said Lady Fitzgerald, as he was leaving the room.

"Certainly;" and, with a look of the most tender commiseration on Dora, he hurried away.

With restored calmness, Dora rose and accompanied Lady Fitzgerald to the room where Cecilia lay.

It was a large apartment looking out upon the park. The windows were shaded by thick curtains, through the folds of which the sunlight shed a subdued radiance into the room, and the flowers on the balcony filled it with their fragrance. On a couch at the upper end lay Cecilia, supported by pillows. Miss Beauford sat by her side, and nurse on a low stool at her feet. The billows that had rolled over that fair head since the evening that witnessed Sir Eustace's capture, had left no traces of their rage. The same ethereal beauty was there, unchanged, or, if changed at all, only more pure and spiritual. Yet, unearthly as was the light that shone in her eyes, transparent as the veil appeared which still enwrapped the angel-spirit, there was nothing that spoke of decay or death in the still rounded proportions of the fragile form, or the pale rose-tint that just colored the alabaster cheek.

From the time of their arrival in London, the first physicians had been consulted regarding Cecilia's state, and they had all agreed that there was no symptom about her of mortal disease. The nervous system, they said, had evidently undergone protracted suffering, and appeared greatly exhausted, and she was evidently in a state in which any sudden shock might prove fatal; but they saw nothing to prevent her entire recovery, and recommended travelling as soon as the season would permit, and cheerful society, as the most likely means of restoring her.

But Cecilia's own conviction that her days were numbered

underwent no change from these favorable prognostics. And strong as was her presentiment of her approaching fate, her persuasion that Sir Eustace would be acquitted was as firm. This appeared to sustain her from the time that his apprehension was made known, while the spirit-life that had long been hers, if it did not render her insensible to the still more harrowing features of the calamity that had overwhelmed her, at least bore her above them.

During the dark hours of that miserable winter, her assurance of Sir Eustace's acquittal had cheered Lady Fitzgerald and Dora under a weight of anxiety almost more than nature could sustain, and, now that the crisis of his fate was at hand, they clung with almost superstitious reliance to the confidence she still expressed.

As Dora and Lady Fitzgerald entered, she greeted their return with her own luminous smile, and, fixing her eyes upon their faces, seemed for a few moments silently to read what was written there. "I see your mission has failed," said she, at last; "but only because relief is coming from a surer source. Fear not, my mother—my sister, this storm will never burst; a little while be strong in trust, a little while bear up, and the dawn will break after this midnight gloom."

Dora spoke not; as pale, and almost as lifeless, as a marble statue, she stood at the foot of Cecilia's couch, one hand unconsciously resting on nurse's shoulder, and her eyes fixed on Cecilia's face, as if she would fain drink into her own soul the light that shone from hers.

Lady Fitzgerald sat down beside her child, and kissed her fair cheek. "God grant that your words may be heaven-inspired, my darling," she said, "and enable us to trust Him without fear, who has promised to plead His children's cause. Oh! if it be so," she added, after a brief pause, while an expression of unearthly hope irradiated her countenance, "what shall we render to the Lord for His unspeakable mercy?"

Miss Beauford's ready handkerchief was applied to her eyes.

"Well, really it is a great thing to be so resigned, and to be able to trust in God, who, to be sure, we know, sends everything for our good, if we poor sinful creatures could only believe it; but I am sure, my dears, I hope to be the better of this example of your faith and patience as long as I live, and no doubt your prayers will be heard; and I am sure Lord Devereux could not feel more, nor exert himself more unweariedly, if he was your own brother, dear Lady Fitzgerald. He is a good man, and so I always said when Blanche St. Aubyn's friends wished to dissuade her from marrying him. She was a great beauty, like her mother, and might have done much better. He is only a Viscount, and not rich; and the Duke of R—— was paying his addresses to her at the same time; but I always said, 'He is a good man, my dear Blanche; if you love him, he will make you happy;' and so it has turned out. Not that I would ever advise any young person to act in so important a matter without their parents' sanction; but her parents did allow her to please herself, and her mother rather wished this marriage. After all, goodness is the only security for happiness, though young people may be deceived by the semblance of it."

A faint color, as the good lady reached this part of her soliloquy, tinged Cecilia's pale cheek.

Miss Beauford saw it, and went on—"And I am sure, when it is so, every one must pity a well-disposed young person in this case, rather than blame. But whatever happens, my dear Dora, you will always have the consolation that you have not thrown your affections away; and two so excellent as you and Sir Eustace, will be sure to meet in heaven, at any rate"

Here the good lady's voice trembled, and the handkerchief was again freely applied; but nurse, whose quick eye marked the quiver of Dora's frame, hastily interposed—"Shure id's wid honor an' glory Sir Eustace (God bless him!) 'll come out iv their hands, the murtherin' villins; an' a brave bridal we'll have at Carlington afore the summer be over; an' shure, Miss Beauford, ma'am, id's yerself that 'll have the bales of beautiful

silks an' satins to take home wid yees intirely to ould Ireland, to show thim the fashions, the crathurs'; for id's you, ma'am dear, has the fine taste."

The eyes of the faithful old woman had been turned, as she spoke, upon Dora's face; and its cold pale stillness pierced her to the heart. She stooped as if to pick some faded rose-leaves from the carpet, but in reality to hide the starting tears. As she rose, she pressed Dora's lifeless hand to her lips, and muttering, "Id's a cup of warm tay they'd all be the betther for," she left the room.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

—"'Mine honor'd love and true,
Bear on, bear nobly on;
We have the blessed heaven in view,
Whose rest shall soon be won.'
And were not these high words to flow
From woman's breaking heart?
Through all that night of bitterest woe
She bore her lofty part."

GERTRUDE.

THAT fearful day and night had passed, and Dora was alone when the first pale streak of dawn stole softly into her room. The fire had gone out, and the morning air, as it chilled her frame, awoke her to consciousness. She arose from her knees, and went to the window. For the last twelve hours the wheel of her life had stood still—a fearful pause of thought and feeling in the one dreadful *now* of her existence, excluding all sense of consolation, and all hope for the future. But the crisis was passed, the storm had ceased, and the calm—the calm of death succeeded; earth to her was now but a name—life, with all *its interests*, had rolled as a shrivelled scroll beneath her feet—

one fearful image in awful magnitude stood before her,—beyond it—beyond it, there was a great gulf, but it was no longer unilluminated.

The evidence had been clear and full. The only link wanting in the chain was supplied by Harris.

She had seen Sir Eustacé's ball enter Count Romilli's side. Two French peasants, brought from Normandy by Father Adrien, who conducted the prosecution, had found him in the forest, a short distance from the *chateau*, at day-break on the same morning. He was alone when they discovered him—deserted, it appeared, by his servants; for a travelling cloak thrown over him, and his pistols loaded by his side, proved that some one had recently been with him, as his own strength was manifestly unequal to the task of making these arrangements. He still breathed, the men declared, when they found him, and they carefully bore him to a neighboring cottage. Here for a few minutes he revived, and, opening his eyes, pronounced the words, "Sir Eustace Fitzgerald has slain me. Seek for Father Adrien Mowbray, and tell him. I commit my soul to the mercy of the Holy Virgin, and my worldly possessions to the Church." As soon as he had spoken these words, he expired. Ignorant of his name and family, the peasants kept his clothes, a signet ring bearing a crest and motto, and the few jewels which were about his person, and he was then interred in the humble church of the village. Their humble home was at the distance of many miles from the *Chateau de* ——, and it was not until a considerable period had elapsed that they accidently heard the name of the family that inhabited it, from a servant belonging to the village, who had been dismissed on the return of Lady Fitzgerald to Ireland. To this servant they mentioned the circumstances attending the Count's death, and by his aid they were enabled to trace Father Adrien. With apparent reluctance, yet as one whose sense of duty towards God, and desire to avenge the murderer of his friend, contended with his feelings of interest and compassion, Father Adrien gave his testimony. It had

not, until the day of trial, been known that he was the accuser. When he appeared in court, a look of surprise, succeeded by a strong expression of indignation, arose on Sir Eustace's face; but it passed, and the calm majesty of his brow and eye, the mild dignity of his manner, when, in few, but clear and powerful words, he repelled the charge of the accuser, told of a conscience void of offence, and a heart then at peace with God, and had learned to forgive, even as he was forgiven. The counsel for the accused defended his case with ability and eloquence; but the impression produced by his own brief words and noble bearing, was greater far, and there was not a heart in that vast assembly that did not pronounce his acquittal.

A dark scowl lowered on Father Adrien's brow, when he saw the sensation that was created; and begging again a few minutes' audience to communicate some particulars a false pity for the accused had before induced him to withhold, he insisted, with much apparent candor, and a well-feigned show of reluctance, upon the previous antipathy known to exist between Sir Eustace and his deceased friend, upon the pride which marked Sir Eustace's character, and which had been stung in its most sensitive point by the insult he supposed his family to have sustained. Father Adrien paused as he uttered these words, and when he saw the attention of the crowd fixed upon him, he continued in a more thrilling pathos—"I know not whether you are aware that the quarrel that ended so fatally for Count Romilli, originated in Sir Eustace Fitzgerald barbarously tearing from a husband who adored her, his unfortunate sister, who had been privately married to the Count, under pretence of having discovered that my noble friend was a priest in disguise—a pretext as unfounded as it was absurd. For some months he had immured her in a *chateau* in Normandy, and when at length her husband discovered her retreat, and came to reclaim her, this was the hour that, regardless of the anguish he was inflicting on his innocent sister, who, in the very moment of escape, *her tore* from the arms of him who loved her so faithfully—this

was the hour that Sir Eustace chose for wreaking his vengeance on one who had never injured him—for destroying a life with which one he was bound to cherish was entwined. Well has he done his work—my noble friend lies in a bloody grave, and the wretched girl who was made the pretext of her brother's malignity, is slowly sinking to the only rest that remains for her broken heart."

An expression of intense contempt had given place to one of strong indignation on Sir Eustace's face, as Father Adrien proceeded; and he appeared on the point of interrupting him, but had refrained.

A visible sensation was produced amongst the audience, and looks of distrust and groans of disapproval began to take the place of the sympathy and admiration with which Sir Eustace had been regarded. He marked the change, but heeded it not; for his trust was placed on One who cannot be swayed to and fro like a reed in the tempest.

When Father Adrien had finished, he craved permission to speak, which was at once granted. "The charge that Mr. Mowbray has brought against me," he said, with the calm dignity that had marked his whole deportment, "is irrelevant. It is enough to say that this matter has already been judged by the laws of my country, who pronounced the evidences of Count Romilli's treachery sufficient. Of the deeper crime with which I am this day charged, I solemnly, and in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, declare that I am guiltless. The true statement of these circumstances which have been asserted by my accusers, is now before your lordship. To the justice of my country and the will of my God, I now commit my fate."

He ceased. The fitful tide of popular feeling, moved by the majestic composure of his manner, by the beauty of his countenance, and the melody of his voice, not less than by the misfortunes he had endured, and the fate which threatened him, turned in his favor; and the anxiety manifested while the jury was in deliberation, was intense. A breathless silence pervaded

the court as they re-entered. It needed but a glance to read the verdict in their faces. There was a solemn pause. The judge appeared to shrink from the duty of his office. At last he assumed the symbol of doom, and pronounced the fatal sentence. In the dead stillness that reigned around, each slow and measured word reverberated like the tone of a passing bell. It ceased. Every eye was riveted on Sir Eustace. His cheek blanched not, nor did his calm eye change, as he heard the sentence of death, and the next moment, with firm step and princely bearing, he had left the court. None moved or spoke until the last echo of his departing footstep had died into silence. Then was that mighty assembly shaken as by a rushing blast, and sobs and groans, mingled with hissings and abuse of judge and jury, resounded on all sides as the crowd slowy dispersed.

* * * * * * * * *

Another day, and the door of hope must close for ever. Exertions almost superhuman had been made to procure a pardon, or at least a reprieve, for the purpose of further investigation of the evidence; but success was still denied.

In the minds of all who knew Sir Eustace personally, the conviction of his innocence was unassailable; but beyond that circle, his pride of character, and high sense of family honor, were as well known, perhaps in some cases better, than the strength of his principles; and there were not wanting those who believed him capable, in a moment of excited feeling, of avenging the interests of his house, even so fatally and foully as he was accused of having done. Another obstacle to the exercise of mercy in his case, existed in the unwillingness of Government to permit an offender of rank to escape, where so many of the lower orders, upon less full and conclusive evidence, had, within the last few years, suffered the penalty of their crimes. Still, hope existed—for how slender is the element of vision to sustain hope!—and it lived still in every breast but Dora's. From the hour of his condemnation, with her it had *been past*; while all was uncertainty and suspense, her spirit

had well-nigh been overwhelmed by the fearful tempest that assailed it; but when the utter wreck of her happiness had come, she sat down, as it were, on the desolate shore, and raised her heart and hopes from the ruined earth, to the world that knows no change.

It was midnight now, and Lady Fitzgerald sat by the couch of her sleeping child. It seemed as if the same fatal blow was to deprive her of both her children, for, from the hour of Sir Eustace's condemnation, Cecilia had sunk, as if to revive no more. The fever of the spirit, which had so long preyed upon her life, made fearful havoc—nor did any who loved her wish it otherwise; for all the hopes so fondly cherished, that in the home of her childhood, and surrounded by its innocent pleasures and fond endearments, the dark past would, in time, be forgotten, and she be happy once more, had perished now; and her mother and Dora, more closely united to each other than ever, by all they had suffered together, could only rejoice that one so dear and so fragile should be sheltered from the storms which they must brave. For the first time for many nights, Cecilia slept tranquilly. The trouble had passed from her fair young brow, and a look of repose recalled to her mother the smile of her sleeping infancy while she watched her there. A footstep suddenly sounded along the passage, and, fearful of breaking Cecilia's slumber, her mother softly went to the door, to stop the intruder. It was Miss Beauford; an expression of grave sorrow was on her face, but Lady Fitzgerald hardly remarked it till she said that Lord Devereux waited to see her in the drawing-room. Then the mother's heart boded too truly; and, hastening along the passage, in a moment she was with him. Few words were needed to confirm the fatal tidings—the pardon was refused.

Slowly and sadly Lady Fitzgerald stole back to the couch of her sleeping child, and kneeling, she leant her brow upon Cecilia's lifeless hand, and remained long there in deep and voiceless prayer. The mortal struggle of the spirit was stilled at last, and she rose calm and strong in a power which was not her own,

prepared to resign all she loved on earth to Him who had bestowed them, and ransomed them and her to a glorious immortality. As she rose, she was struck by the expression on Cecilia's countenance; a strange light illumined it, as if some bright visions were gladdening her sleep; and, as her mother gazed, she opened her eyes, and spoke in a voice no longer faint and low, but full of the rich music of happier days—

"Come near me, dear mother. I have a message of peace for you—I have had a sore conflict, but it is all past now. I know Him faithful who has promised—and I know that Eustace will be saved. Oh! mother, when all was lost, and death brooded over him, and misery—dreadful, hopeless misery—was the only future we had to look to on earth, my peace in God was all shattered too, and dark and fearful thoughts overwhelmed me. I thought that if this trust, that had been so full and clear, was vain, my hopes of salvation might be disappointed too, and I doubted God and His promise. It was a dark and fearful time—but it is past. He has spoken to me in a vision of the night, and I know now that he is faithful, and it shall be even as we have desired."

Could it indeed be! Was there yet hope? Lady Fitzgerald feared to admit the ray of consolation that Cecilia's words, and still more, the extraordinary state of her mind, imparted. Yet she could not altogether shut it out, and, waiting to see the end, she forbore to damp a joy that seemed already to have restored to her veins the warm current of life and health. Her precautions, however, were vain. She left her for a little, to prepare for almost the last visit to the prison of her son. Miss Beauford took her place, and, notwithstanding all her resolutions of assuming a cheerfulness that should conceal the truth, the quick eye of her companion easily penetrated the mask.

"Has anything new happened, dear Miss Beauford?" she inquired. "Has Lord Devereux been here?"

"Not since yesterday, my love," replied the lady, availing *herself of* the fact of Lord Devereux's visit having been a few

minutes before midnight; "and you know that then he was full of hope that the exertions of Sir Eustace's friends would prove effectual."

"But has nothing been heard since then?" repeated Cecilia, anxiously.

"How should I know, my love? Of course something must have happened to-day, though we may not have heard it yet. Of course matters must all be decided to-day; and a scandal it is upon Government, as Lord Devereux says, that such a thing should be suffered to take place in one of the oldest families of either England or Ireland. To be sure, if people of old families commit crimes, they must suffer for them like other people; but then every one knows Sir Eustace is innocent, or, if they do not, they ought to know it; and I am sure any one who looks at him might know it, if they would but exercise their common sense; not but what in old times many gentlemen, of as high degree and as noble mind as Sir Eustace, avenged themselves on their enemies, and suffered for it too—but these things are differently regarded now-a-days; and, to be sure, it would be a stain on the honor of the Fitzgeralds; and Lord Devereux told me, only yesterday morning, that he had very little doubt the applications for pardon would be successful; and it is very dreadful indeed to think"——here the good lady was overcome by her own reflections; and tears, very different from those which many minor occasions called forth, rolled down her cheeks.

In one moment Cecilia saw the truth, and, starting up in bed, exclaimed—"They have failed, then, and my brother must die!"

"I never said so, my love, I am sure," said Miss Beauford, startled out of her grief by terror at the disclosure she had made. "I am sure I never said so; and, indeed, one cannot tell what may happen yet; and many a time a reprieve has come at the last,—sometimes just in time to stop the execution."

But, at that fearful word, a thrill of horror convulsed Cecilia's

frame, and, springing from the bed, she exclaimed—"I will go to him!—I will see my brother once more!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen at Miss Beauford's feet, it could scarcely have electrified her more—the being whom she had thought incapable of exertion, almost of motion, ready to be destroyed by a breath, standing before her full of life and energy, her eye glittering, and her cheek glowing with the mock hue of health.

Almost beside herself, the poor watcher could only wring her hands and exclaim—"Compose yourself, my love—for pity's sake, go to bed! Oh! this will kill you!—oh dear! what shall I do!"

But, with a determination that would not be contradicted, and with a strength that seemed supernatural, Cecilia summoned her maid, and, with her assistance, quietly prepared for her visit to the prison.

Not in darkness or gloom had the night watches passed there. From the beginning Sir Eustace had given up all hope of any change in his sentence. He saw too clearly that the same causes which had procured his condemnation would work against its commutation, and he anxiously sought to guard Dora's mind from the agonies of suspense into which the transitions from hope to fear would have thrown her.

It was now early morning, but Sir Eustace and Dora heeded not the soft gleam of the April dawn that stole through the barred windows, and paled the dim lights of the prison cell. Hardly were they conscious of the strong walls which bound them, for their spirits, in brief forgetfulness of the fearful gulf still to be passed, had risen above the dark vapors of earth in that high communion already begun, whose perfection their souls panted to attain. They mourned not that their life had been darkened in its summer dawn, and the blossoms of hope and joy scattered, in their opening beauty, on the ground. A brighter summer stretched its unfading glory full in their view, and the pure atmosphere already inhaled inspired their souls

with the vigor of immortal health. Dora was absorbed in him who was already almost an inhabitant of another world, and not one look was turned earthward towards the widowed path she must tread alone. Sir Eustace sat on the stone bench in the end of his prison cell—Dora, on the low seat she always occupied beside him; and at the extreme corner of the long low room, her figure dimly seen in the changing light, was nurse, her hands supporting her head, her arms leaning upon her knees, and her cloak drawn round her in the fashion of her country. She had turned her face away from where they sat, her figure so immovable, that it seemed more like a statue than a living form, her presence forgotten by those in whom her whole heart was wrapped up. Had it been otherwise, that faithful heart was too well known for her presence to disturb them.

Long and deep was their converse. All that regarded earth had been briefly settled—and now they were silent, but it was no voiceless silence that bound them in its spell.

"Dora," said Sir Eustace at last, "I have one request still to make, and I know you will not refuse me."

She looked up in his face without speaking—her eyes alone answered the appeal.

"Bear, for the short time you linger behind me," he said, "the name you will not regard as dishonored. It will comfort me to call you mine on earth—to think of you as mine in heaven."

A vision of the past burst on Dora's sight as he spoke these words—a vision of the life that had been opening before her—a life spent with him who was her guide, her friend, her all. She bent her head on his hand, and large quiet tears, wrung from the freshly-opened depths of mortal sorrow, flowed from her eyes—they dried on her burning cheek as they fell; thus it must not be, her grief must not disturb him. She strove, and not in vain, to check their flow; but a deadly chill seized upon her heart, and a pallor like that of death overspread her features. She was recalled to life by the voice of Sir Eustace.

"Strive not thus, my beloved," he said, "to check the outpourings of nature; fear not that I should deem you weak, but receive rather this testimony to cheer you when I am gone—you have not failed in the hour of need—strong and faithful, even as tender and true, you have extracted the bitterest drop from the cup of sorrow, the sting from my thoughts of you." A momentary pang contracted his brow, as he added—"That pang was the thought that I must leave you defenceless in a world all dreary and cold. Now I know that the storm will not fall on the unsheltered head of a trembling woman, but assail a heaven-supported spirit hastening to rejoin me in our eternal home.—Yes, tender and faithful one," he continued after a short pause—"take my heart's blessing, my eternal gratitude for all you have been to me, and, last of all, for the light you have shed over my path to the tomb.——This is not the darkest hour we have spent together, Dora," said Sir Eustace, after a long silence—"remember the wood of Ballinasloe, parted for ever on earth, with no hope of union in heaven! Ah! compared to that hour, is not this as the sun at noon-day? Yet you were calm then, for you had devoted yourself to a life of charity on earth, and of prayer for the salvation of him you might never more behold; such a life is before you again, but now blessed, sanctified, and brightened by heaven's own light."

Dora answered only by a silent pressure of the hand she held. Her face was bent upon it, so that Sir Eustace could not see its expression. He could only feel the slow full throb of her heart. He did not hear her low breathing—by that throb alone he knew that the pulse of life still moved. He feared that he had taxed her strength too far by speaking, in this hour of mortal separation, of the union they had anticipated under such different auspices.

"Forgive me, dearest," he said gently, "I will not urge this request—no ceremony can bind more closely the ties that unite us."

She raised her head, and fixed her eyes full of earnest mean

ing in his face—"No, Eustace ; let it be as you have said. I was silent only because my heart blessed God for a consolation I had not expected.—Yes," she continued, with more agitation of manner—"let me have the right to mourn you—the right to bear that honored name while I linger behind, and to rest in the same tomb when my spirit shall join you in heaven."

At this moment the door opened, and Lady Fitzgerald entered. She had prayed for strength to endure this, to look without hope upon him whom, ere another sun had set, she should behold no more—and strength was given. Her look told him that his doom was fixed, but his cheek paled not, nor did his calm eye change. He had known it before—he opened his arms, and his mother threw herself upon his breast. She wept, but they were quiet tears, and hope, as well as agony, was in their flow. Dora looked on unmoved. She, too, had thought that hope was passed ; yet, if it were so indeed, why did that sudden pallor overspread her features, and that mortal coldness chill her limbs as with the damp of death ?

Nurse, too, read the fatal news. She checked, as it rose to her lips, the wild cry of her country's lamentation, but, throwing her arms above her head, with the passionate though silent gesture that accompanies it, she continued rocking herself backwards and forwards in an utter abandonment of grief. Suddenly an exclamation from her arrested all the party—"The heavens have a care of us !—is it the Holy Virgin herself ?" They turned towards the door, and there indeed stood a being that seemed to belong rather to the world of spirits than to this. The glow of animation had faded from her countenance, which was colorless as the purest alabaster. Her dress clung in heavy folds around her attenuated form, and her golden ringlets, thrown back from her pale face, seemed, as the broad glare of sunlight which streamed in at the prison window fell upon her head, like a halo of glory. Her shining eyes alone spoke of life, but it was spirit-life, that hardly told of kindred with mortality. For an instant a strange thrill touched each heart ; was

it indeed the breathing form of the dying girl that stood before them, endowed with superhuman energy—or was it the spirit, ere it departed from earth, lingering for one last interview with those around whom its love was entwined? Ere the question had shaped itself thus distinctly, she slowly advanced, and, clasping her arms round Sir Eustace's neck, pressed her cold lips to his cheek. It was indeed a living, breathing form he held, though one already almost ethereal.

"I have come to see you once more here, Eustace," she said; "but I cannot think it is for the last time. That vision could not deceive me. I shall yet greet your return to our own Ballyrowan; I shall breathe with you the free air of heaven, and rejoice in the blessed beams of the unimprisoned sun—and then I will go."—She paused.—"If it be otherwise, we shall not be long apart, but I cannot think so." She spoke as if rather communing with her own heart than addressing those around her; and when she had ceased, she again kissed her brother's brow, and lips, and cheek, with the fervor of unutterable love, and then the excitement that had supported her suddenly giving way, her head drooped on his shoulder, and she lay senseless in his arms. He placed her on his hard couch, and gently bathed her forehead, and moistened her lips with cold water—the only beverage his cell afforded. She revived, and opened her eyes, but extreme exhaustion had succeeded the excitement which had supported her—she lay motionless, her lifeless hand clasped in her brother's and her eyes riveted on his face. Thus silently the hours of that long day stole on, and the reddened sunbeams fell aslant on the prison wall, and then faded into gloom, and the prison lamp was lighted—no one knew by whom, for even the harsh jailer trode softly in that cell, and slowly turned the bolts, and moved the rusty hinges of the door, lest he should disturb the strange stillness that both touched and awed him, though he hardly knew why.

Cecilia still lay on her brother's couch, and her mother sat at *its head*. Sir Eustace was beside them—their joint hands

clasped in his. Dora sat on her low seat beside him—nurse had left the prison some hours before. Deep and full that day had their communion been—sometimes in uttered speech, oftener in the heart's voiceless language alone. And amidst their converse, they had spoken of Him whose presence enlightened their dungeon gloom, and made even this dark hour radiant with the hope of immortality.

"Forget not, when I am gone, beloved ones," said Sir Eustace at last, "that we are still together in His kingdom; redeemed by Him, we all have entered into one blessed eternity, though for a time I go to a more distant shore."

The eyes of the listeners were riveted on his, while he continued thus to pour into their hearts the balm of Divine consolation. He ceased, and again there was silence, while from his heart arose intense but voiceless prayer for those he was about to leave.

Worn out by long watching, sleep at length stole over Dora's tried spirit.

Sir Eustace gently supported her head, while he bent over her, and gazed into that pure pale face, where there was now the stillness, but none of the repose of sleep. The deep soul, with its strong enthusiasm—its spiritual elevation—was veiled, and the cloud of sorrow that hung heavy on the fair young brow, the hollow of the marble cheek, told of the breaking heart that lay beneath. Why was it that, as Sir Eustace gazed, a pang more keenly bitter than he yet had suffered pierced his heart's core, and a tear, such as no common sorrow can wring from a strong man's eye, fell upon her brow and awoke her?

She started up; the doleful bell of the prison clock was striking the hour of eight; it was the time appointed for the chaplain to perform the sad ceremonial of their marriage.

"It is come," said Dora, calmly; "I am ready." She rose without withdrawing the hand that Sir Eustace held, and stood by his side, her eyes fixed on the door of the cell. But the

prison door burst open, and nurse flying towards Sir Eustace, threw herself at his feet, and seizing his hand, kissed it frantically, and bathed it with tears, exclaiming, "God bless yer honor, and send confusion to yer inimies now an' evermore, Amin! Shure id's free iv them ye'll be inyhow—glory be to God!—an' safe in yer own counthry, where they can't shut out the sunbames and the air iv heaven from your blissed face, agrah."

A motley procession followed the agitated old woman, consisting of the jailer, the chaplain, a magistrate, and several inferior officials. An agony of terror seized upon Dora's spirit, augmented by nurse's equivocal address.

"Not now," she exclaimed wildly, throwing herself before Sir Eustace; "you told me it would not be to-night."

"Compose yourself, my dear madam," said the magistrate, coming forward; "we have good news for you. Information has just been received, which completely invalidates the testimony of the witnesses on Sir Eustace Fitzgerald's trial, and I come to set him at liberty."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"There is no fear in him; let him not die,
For he will live."

JULIUS CÆSAR.

"And will I see his face again?
And will I hear him speak?

OLD SCOTTISH BALLAD.

No one in that rescued household thought of rest. It was long past midnight—the fire blazed brightly on the hearth—the soft glow of shaded lamps shed a subdued light throughout the room—refreshments were on the table—and home, with its

blessed repose and gladsome liberty, was around them. The day had dawned which was to have been the day of doom, and with one heart and one voice they praised the God of their salvation, who had restored them to life and light.

At last Cecilia was persuaded to seek the repose she so greatly needed. No one else retired. Lady Fitzgerald sat on the couch Cecilia had just left, Dora by her side. Sir Eustace was near, Dora's hand clasped in his—her eyes, full of dream-like gladness, fixed on his face, as if she hardly yet could realize that she beheld it, and not for the last time. Miss Beauford sat erect in a high-backed chair, with her eyes passing in wondering gaze from one to another of the group—her lips apart, as if to drink in the marvels for which eyes and ears were not sufficient receptacles ; and her embroidered handkerchief in her hand ready for use. Nurse sat on a stool at her feet—her elbows resting on her knees, and her head on her hands, after her usual fashion when deeply interested.

"Well, it is the most extraordinary thing I ever knew," said Miss Beauford—who all that blessed night had been weeping and laughing by turns, congratulating every one, and almost beside herself with joy, until nurse declared, "The soul of an Irish woman is in the lady afther all, sure enough, and she's one of the rale sort, ivery inch iv her, barrin' the starched ruffles and the English tongue."—"It is the most extraordinary thing, and nothing could equal it but the old romances—indeed, I never read any to be compared to it ; and now, I am sure I hope all is going to wind up as prosperously. But do, pray, good nurse, let us hear all about it, for every one speaks, and yet we cannot get all the circumstances clearly explained."

"Yes," said Lady Fitzgerald, "tell us all ; for I yet can hardly understand how this great deliverance has come about."

"Well, thin, me lady and yer honors," she began, "ye see, whin the girl Kathleen came wid me lady Miss Cecilia (God bless her !) to that place which I'd scorn to defile me tongue wid mintionin' this blissid day —as she turned to lave the place, she

slipt a bit of a note into me hand, and who would it be from but Mrs. Harris herself?—biddin' me be shure to be at her house at an hour she named, an' I'd hear of somethin' that consarned thim that lay nearest me heart. Id was two o'clock iv the day thin, an' she bade me be wid her at three, an' the place she directed me to was a long way off; so I made bould to slip away widout (by yer lave), an' I took O'Gorman wid me, yer honor, becase he knowed the road; an' id was well I did, as yer honors will hear. 'Howsomeyer, we got to the house jist in time; an' afore we had time to knock at the dure, it was opened by Mrs. Harris herself, an' puttin' her finger to her lips, in token we'd not be spakin', she led us up the stairs into a room, and shut the dure, herself comin' in alongst wid us. All the way as we came, when I thought iv the harm she'd been doin' to his honor, Sir Eustace, an' the sorrow she'd wrought for us all, I thought I'd have trampled her under me feet the moment I'd got sight iv her; but whin I had seen her, somethin' came over me heart, an' I prayed to myself that the Lord 'ud have marcy upon her, for shure she looked like one that was doomed. At the upper end iv the room she led us into, there was a curtain hung, an' forninst it was a dure; the dure was a little bit open, so that any one could see what passed in the next, an' they that 'ud be spakin' be none the wiser. She moved the curtain a little, an' I could see there was a small room inside—a table and a lamp set upon id, for there was niver a window in id at all. 'Stay here,' she said, 'an' watch what'll happin.' She was goin' to lave the room, whin she turned back an' came close up to me, an' fixed her eyes straight in me face, wid a look that made me blood curdle at me heart. 'Mrs. O'Sullivan,' says she. 'Ma'am,' says I. 'It was no favor nor goodwill we bore each other when we lived together at Carlington,' says she. 'Thrue for ye, ma'am,' says I. 'And yit,' says she, 'I know that ye're thrue-hearted and faithful, and therefore I sint for ye, for I have neither rest by day nor sleep by night, since the hour that I sould his life; and I will not again let my

hands be stained with blood, come of it what will. Blood-stains are there already, and years of anguish and penances that well-nigh drained the springs of life, have failed to wash them away.' She looked wild when she said this, and I thought the raison was gone from her. 'Make a clane breast, Mrs. Harris,' says I; 'an shure if man cannot take away yer sin, there's One above can wash us white even from the stains of blood.' She grew calmer when I spoke—'It may be so,' she said. She stood quiet a minute, and then said in a quick kind of way—'An' you that are a good woman pray that I may find mercy at the last.' 'I will,' says I; 'but oh! if ye have a sowl in yer body, tell us what will free Sir Eustace! I'll pray for ye on my binded knees ache night afore I sleep; for it 'ud break yer heart intirely, to see the sorrow that's in id, and the ruin and misery that's come upon us.' 'Well,' she says quickly, 'it's for that I sint for ye; so be quiet, and listen to what I've to say. Sit still here, and watch all that goes on in that room, both of you—I am glad you have come'—and that was the first word she had spoken to O'Gorman—'for the testimony of two is needed, and I had forgotten to provide for that. Whin ye've seen enough, hasten to the nearest magistrate and give information, and lose no time in comin' back. And now, farewell; this may cost my life—but if it do, it is better than the misery of those bitter years—you'll hear of me no more—but remember your promise.' She took my hand betwixt her own, and they were as cold as marble. 'Shure, if ye're afraid harm 'ud come on you,' says I, 'why 'ud ye not be lavin' the place wid us?' 'I cannot, I cannot,' says she, quickly; 'I'll try to escape afterwards, and I may; if not, God have mercy on my soul!' Wid that, a shiver came over her, and she turned white as a snow-wreath; but she wrung my hand, and was out of the room afore I could spake the word of comfort. And shure enough, where was I to git it? for it was the sowl-throuble that was on her, and that is the worst of all. She was not gone, maybe, five minutes, whin I heard voices in the next room, and so, looking through the

opening she had made for us, we saw, the two iv us, a man muffled up in a cloak to the face, come into the little room, and he was followed by another wid a mask on. I thought I knowed the first, and shure enough, whin he'd thrown away his cloak, there was his rivirence Father Adrien himself; but in another minute, the tall man in black but away the mask—who should it be but him ye know of? I thought me heart 'ud have left me body, whin I thought of all that was come and gone; and the mischief he had done to the innocent lamb that never hurt him or no one; and a wirrasthru was ready to choke me, but I kept it down, and held my very breath in, for fear we'd be found out. 'We are in the last act now, I suppose,' said the Count, wid a sneer and a laugh, that made me very blood freeze in me heart—'and the last scene, I suppose, will be acted to-morrow morning. The tragedy has gone well so far—and you have done your part; now for the farce, and see how I will maintain mine.' ''Tis a winning stake you've to play,' said Father Adrien; 'the trouble and odium will all rest on me; but so be it—the Holy Church will remember that.' 'No danger—you have done her good service; but how long must I keep quiet after the brother is disposed of?' 'You must be guided by circumstances. The girl, they say, is dying, and this may hasten you; you must come forward in time to secure the prize.' 'You are sure that the whole of her brother's fortune goes to her?' 'Every shilling of it, except what my Lady Fitzgerald—(the spalpeens! I'd not be defiling me mouth wid the disrespictful names they put on your Ladyship—my malison rest on their heads!)—liferents; and as for that, there's no doubt but she'll go fast enough to Italy or anywhere else, to be with her daughter; and then—oh! then, all is safe enough'—wid that laugh, more like a devil's than a man's. 'But are you sure no new difficulties will start up when I come to unfrock myself?—these English laws of yours are stubborn things.' 'There is no danger,' said Father Adrien—(oh! little we knowed at Carlington what kind of a praste had the rule over us!)—'there

were but two witnesses of your priestly character, reverend Father; one of these will soon be silenced, and as for the old woman, she can easily be got out of the way.' 'And have we no mischief to dread from the other girl? (maning yerself, cushla machree!)—[the old woman paused in her tale, and gazed up in Dora's face with a look of unutterable devotion].—'I do not see what mischief she can work,' said Father Adrien—(ruin and destruction on his head, the unnatural villain!—that 'ud spake the word of my own child, and she his flesh and blood, too!) 'but at any rate, her time will be short; a foreign convent, or' —(wid that I could hear no more, I could have flown at him, and torn the very eyes from his head, but O'Gorman held me back; and it's well he did, or I would never have left that murderer in life)—'Hould your pace, woman,' he whispered, 'or all will be lost—but run for the magisthrate, an' I'll be kapin' watch until ye come back.' So I ran for the bare life, and whin I got to the strate, I cried out for a policeman, till the people thought the since was gone from me intirely. At last, a policeman came up—'Is it to take yersilf into custody, good woman, ye're roarin'?' says he. 'No, sir,' says I, 'but thim that's more need of id—take two or three more wid yees, an' follow me.' So they kem, an' I found the house dure as I'd left it; an' I led thim up the stairs an' into the room, where O'Gorman sat still as a mouse. He beckoned us forward wid his finger. They were risin' to lave the place, so no time was foreninst us. 'You will keep closely here till to-morrow,' said Father Adrien, as he was a-goin'; 'if Count Romilli appears before eight o'clock to-morrow morning, all is lost, and remember there are many in town who know you.' 'I will be careful,' said the Count; 'but the woman Harris, is she quite safe?' 'She is bound both by interest and fear,' said Father Adrien again; 'and it took them both to make her swear all we required to convict Sir Eustace.' 'How!' said the Count, wid a sudden look round at the dure where we war standin'; 'you do not mean to say you employed false witness?' As the word left his mouth, the policeman

sprang upon him. He went to secure Father Adrien, but jist as he laid his hand on his rivirence's shoulder, the wall that he had been lanin' aginst opened, and Father Adrien vanisht clane and intirely foreninst our eyes. The men sarched, and sarched, bud no mark nor hinge could they see no ways; an' at last they were obleest to lave the place, an' his rivirence behind them. So we went straight to the magisthrate's, all iv us—the Count an' the policeman, O'Gorman an' me—'for we've nade of yees to swear to him,' says they; and so to the coort-house we wint, all iv us, shure enough; and who had our look, or rather a kind providence—(shame on us, to be spakin' like hathins!)—sint afore us there, but the masther iv the hotel where the Count lodged on his way to Carlington!—(black be the day that ever he set fute in ould Ireland!)—an' he sware till him out an' out, an' so he was sint to the prison—(a fit place id is for the likes of him)—to wait for his trial; an' was id not as the bird 'ud fly to id's nest whin the hawk's over id, that I fled to ye then, jewel iv my heart, mavourneen grah?"

* * * * * * * * *

Next evening all preparations for their return to Ireland were completed, and on the following morning they prepared to leave the scene of so much misery and such exquisite happiness.

The bitter drop that would have poisoned Cecilia's cup was extracted by the care of the loving hearts around her. She knew not that it was the capture of him she had once loved with all the devotion of her young spirit that had secured the freedom of her brother.

On the evening of that day, Dora had yielded to the entreaties of Lady Fitzgerald that she would seek a few hours' repose, and nurse had smoothed her darling's pillow, and drawn her curtains, to shade the setting of the glorious sun, that twenty-four hours before she had watched, with a breaking heart, slowly fading from the prison wall.

She was stealing on tiptoe from the room, when she was met by O'Gorman, his face full of important meaning—"There is

one below askin' spache av yer lady, Mrs. Sullivan," he said ; " an' she's in a mighty hurry intirely, for id's life an' death, she's sayin', are in her speed."

" An' who'd be afther spakin' to me darlint, an' her jist takin' the rest that she's sore in nade of—Heaven bless her ! Hows'ever, iv id's life an' death that's in id, I'll not be aginst yees, O'Gorman, but give her the missage—shure thim that's resaved marcy should be ready to give id."

" Thrue for ye, Mrs. Sullivan ; an' shure id's a power iv spache ye always had, an' a good woman ye are to be mindin' that same. But will I bring the slip iv a girl to yees here ?—for id's spache iv Miss Mowbray face to face she must have."

" Shure there's no ill for me darlint in id," said nurse, thoughtfully ; " what can a slip iv a girl do ?—an' I'll stop wid her, inyhow."

O'Gorman went to fulfil his mission, while nurse unwillingly re-entered Dora's room, and softly drew near the bed to awake her.

But it needed not such caution. Dora's mind was too full of thought, and the depths of her heart had been too recently stirred, to permit of such swift repose.

She started up with a look of alarm as nurse entered,—" is all well ?" she inquired, anxiously.

" All well, mavourneen ; and sorry id is meself 'ud be to disturb yer rest, dear ; bud who so ready as me own child to do a work of marcy ? an' id's that is asked at yer hand jist now."

In a few minutes nurse ushered into the room a young girl, who insisted upon delivering her message to Miss Mowbray alone.

Nurse lingered rather anxiously, but the girl remained silent, and Dora asked her to go to the dressing-room for a few moments, assuring her she need be under no apprehension for her safety.

As soon as the door was closed, the girl approached Dora, and hurriedly but earnestly implored her to accompany her,

without delay, to the house where she had formerly seen Harris, as the unfortunate woman was dying, and wished to see her before she departed. "'Bid her hasten,' she said, ma'am," the girl continued, "'for I have much to say, and my hour is at hand. And bid her come alone.'"

Dora did not for an instant hesitate to obey the summons. Lady Fitzgerald wished to accompany her, but she felt that this would be transgressing the wish of Harris, and she went attended by nurse only, who insisted upon accompanying her to the room, and stationing a servant outside the door.

"I've seen plenty in my time, cushla machree," she said; "an' id's not through their saycrit dures an' away be their murtherin' holes they'll be draggin' ye, jewel of me heart, while yer ould nurse can give the call to thim that's able to purtect yees."

Their summons was answered by the mistress of the house, who told them they were too late. The unfortunate Harris had not spoken since a few minutes after the messenger for Dora had been despatched. "But she is still alive, Miss," said the woman; "would you be pleased to step up to her room?—the sight of you may revive her, for she has been in a sad way to see you ever since she was taken ill." Without lingering to ask further questions, Dora, closely followed by nurse, accompanied the woman up the well-remembered staircase to the room where her interview with Harris had taken place.

An involuntary shudder passed over her when her eyes rested on the pallid and hardly breathing form of the being who had exercised so strange an influence over her destiny, as she lay upon a low bed at the opposite side of the room. She approached. At the sound of her footstep, Harris opened her eyes, and fixing them with a wildly eager expression on Dora's face, she appeared to gather up all her remaining strength for one last effort, and in hollow tones articulated, "I am poisoned —beware of Father ——." Her voice sunk, but her eyes continued fixed upon Dora, and her lips moved. Dora bent to catch the word, "Forgive."

"I do freely forgive you, Harris," said Dora, earnestly; "and more than forgive—I bless you—for your last act has cancelled all the past. May you find mercy with God, through the merits of our Saviour." A smile shone for a minute over her haggard features; she pressed Dora's hand, and, in scarcely audible accents murmuring, "I hope," with the effort, expired.

Greatly affected, Dora stood for some moments by the insensible form of that strange being; she was aroused by an exclamation from the woman of the house, who entered, and turning to her, sought to obtain some explanation of the events which had just occurred. The woman was either unable or unwilling to throw much light upon the circumstances. She said that Mrs. Harris had appeared quite well the night before —that she slept under her—and during the night she had heard her walking up and down the room, and she did not think she had gone to bed. Towards morning, the sound of footsteps increased, as if more than one person were in the room; she heard a murmur of voices, and then all was silent; and when she entered the room in the morning, Mrs. Harris was lying insensible. She immediately called a doctor, and, in consequence of the remedies he had used, she had revived towards the afternoon, and begged that Miss Mowbray might be sent for, which was immediately done.

"She was a strange being," said the woman; "and I often wished she had never come to my house, for I am sure there was something on her conscience, and I fear she has been guilty of some great crime—she always looked so gloomy and abstracted; and in the middle of the night, when the house was all still, I would often hear her voice as if she were conversing with some other person; and footsteps and sounds she could not have made alone were heard in her room—enough to make one think she had dealings with the evil one; not but what she was a good Catholic," said the woman, crossing herself, "but perhaps the evil spirits had power over her because of her sin, though she was doing penance for it all the while."

"Did any one ever come here to visit her?" inquired Dora.

"No one, excepting her priest. His reverence seemed to be of high rank—an elderly man of a very grave presence, with gray hair, and an eye that always saw you, though he might be looking at twenty other things at the same time. Two or three days ago, another gentleman came with him; and you know," she added, turning to nurse, "what took place then; but is it not dreadful to think that she died without the sacraments!"

She seemed afraid that she had talked rather too freely, and carefully avoided recurring again to the subject; so Dora was obliged to leave the house without receiving any further information. At the door she was met by Sir Eustace, who had returned to Belgrave Square a few minutes after she had left it, and, greatly alarmed when he heard of the summons she had received, had followed her without delay.

A coroner's inquest was held on the unfortunate Harris, and a verdict of "death by poison" returned; but all attempts to trace the murderer failed, and it was supposed that, driven to desperation by Father Adrian's anger at her treachery, she had committed the fatal act herself. Under this idea, she was laid by night in a lonely spot of unconsecrated ground; and, as no relations could be found, her effects were investigated by the authority of the police. A fire-place in her room was found filled with newly-burned papers, and several were found torn and defaced in the escritoire from which she had taken the testimony against Sir Eustace on the day of Dora's first visit to her; but there was nothing to throw any light upon her history, except a small clasped Bible, much worn, but apparently not with reading; on the fly-leaf was written—"To my daughter Alice, with the prayers and blessing of her father, Joseph Blane." This, along with money, and trinkets of considerable value, were kept in safe custody, in case they should be at any future time claimed by her relations; and an advertisement was put in the newspapers to aid in such a discovery. A few weeks afterwards, an old man, whose likeness to the unfortunate woman,

despite of his bent figure and silver hair, strongly confirmed his testimony, appeared and claimed her as his daughter. He stated that he was a schoolmaster in a remote part of England, where his child had resided with him until her eighteenth year. "She was the pride of all the country," he said, "for her beauty and her talents; and we little thought what was to follow, when a noble family came to the neighborhood, and persuaded her to go abroad with them, to wait on their only daughter. We let her go with sore hearts, but thought it was for her good, and from Paris we got one letter from her, but never another. We wrote and wrote, and many a weary day and year we watched and waited, till hope grew sick, and died at last, but we never got word of her more. Her mother, too, died of grief for her loss. She is well away, for she will never hear the end."

The truth of the old man's story, and the identity of his lost child with the unhappy Harris, were proved without difficulty, and the wealth—to these simple people of no small magnitude—which had probably been amassed by a life of misery and crime, enriched the venerable man's surviving family.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Through the stately fane,
Circled with thy nuptial train;
'Midst the banners hung on high,
By thy warrior ancestry;
'Midst those mighty fathers dead,
In soft beauty thou wast led."

THE BRIDAL MORN.

THE golden beams of a May morning shone brightly on the travellers as the vessel in which they embarked for Ireland left the shore. The blue waves dashed round them, and the light

breeze, that scarcely curled their sparkling crests as it blew from the west, seemed to bear with it the freedom and gladness of their own land. An awning was spread on the deck, and Cecilia reclined beneath it—her mother by her side. Sir Eustace and Dora sometimes joined them, and sometimes walked on the deck, while, with hearts too full for utterance, they gazed on the receding shores of England, and watched the nearing of their own green isle. A little apart from the rest, Miss Beauford, assisted by Kathleen, guarded with jealous care from every perilous motion certain bales of goods, which apparently possessed no common value in her eyes. Their short passage was completed, and they reached the pier of Cork ere they were aware that a party had occupied the cabin in whom they possessed more than a passing interest. The crowd was great on landing; and while Sir Eustace endeavored to guard Cecilia from its pressure, he was obliged, for a few moments, to leave Dora alone. While she stood thus a little apart, she was attracted by the beauty of a young Italian lady, who was leaning on her husband's arm, at a little distance. Her dark eyes were watching with eager interest, the novel scene around her; and such varying expression was playing on her countenance, that Dora's attention was for some minutes completely absorbed. She moved at last, to make room, as the gentleman endeavored to place his wife near the quiet place where she stood; and as he turned to thank her, she recognized the features of Lord Belmont. A vivid flush mounted to his forehead, while she became pale as marble, but a moment more restored the self-possession of both, and Dora received his lovely wife with the graceful ease of a sister. The crowd gave way, and before Sir Eustace and Lady Fitzgerald had joined them, Lord and Lady Belmont had landed, and entering the carriage that waited for them, drove rapidly along the road to Glenarvon.

This brief interview removed from Dora's mind the painful sense of having destroyed another's happiness, which had never *ceased to* weigh upon it; and, in after years, she and Sir

Eustace found, both in Lord and Lady Belmont, warm and true-hearted friends.

It was late in the evening ere the green woods of Ballyrowan, glowing in the crimson sunbeams, opened on the longing sight of the returning exiles. Happy tears filled Dora's eyes, as they rested at last on "the white porch of her home." But ere the gushing joy which overflowed each heart had time for more than looks of interchange, shouts of rapture arose on every side, and cries of "Long life to yer honor's glory!—Ye're welcome back to yer own!—Confusion to thim that 'ud throw dust on the road ye tread!" filled the evening air. Flowers were showered around the carriage. The horses were removed, and it was drawn in happy triumph up the avenue by gaily-dressed peasants; and, for the remainder of the evening, the lawn re-echoed to all the hilarity of Irish feasting; and shouts of rapturous gratulation, songs and cheering, and the music of the merry dance, spoke the glad welcome home, from danger and distress, of their almost worshipped master.

Happy were these hours to Dora's long-tried heart, and rich with a yet deeper, holier happiness was the hour that followed, when, in the quiet moonlight, she walked with Sir Eustace from the hushed scenes of the night's revelry to the calm river-side, and they together thanked God that their long probation was over now, and a few days more would unite them for ever.

Soon after their arrival at Ballyrowan, Dora, accompanied by Miss Beauford and nurse, returned to Carlington. But two short weeks she was to pass there before her bridal, and these, in compliance with her own wish, she was permitted to spend almost entirely alone. Her spirit felt the need of the deep quiet of that solitude, to gather its powers in calm review of all the strange and varied past, and in preparation for the new phase of existence upon which she was about to enter.

Day by day she passed in wandering over her ancient haunts. It was the same season of the year as that in which she had returned from France to take possession of her own domain,

and all around smiled fresh and unchanged as then; but what ages of mental life had rolled over her! how changed, yet how individual was her being!

She retraced, in the dewy morning, the footsteps of her first joyous wanderings, when, in the fresh buoyancy of a spirit that had known no blight, she had looked forward to life as one long summer day. She wandered when the summer moon silvered the tall tree-tops in the wood of Ballinasloe, and made its dark recesses a sanctuary, where she offered sacrifices of thanksgiving to the God who had saved her.

And again, as in days of yore, she would sit on the rocks and gaze out on the dreamy expanse of waters shining like burnished gold, with the sun's parting smile, and remember the desolate heart with which she had sat there till God sent a protector for her lonely life; and how, even when she was left solitary and hopeless again, her loneliness was never so dreary, for she knew one noble and true heart loved her, and her spirit was no longer alone.

Thus she would wander, drinking in the wisdom of the past, gathering a deep and thoughtful maturity of soul from all that her young life had known, and brooding on the ideal future. Meanwhile, Miss Beauford contentedly left her to herself, for she too was deeply occupied. Never were such preparations known as extended from hall to bower, for the approaching marriage of the heiress of Carlington.

Lord and Lady Devereux, and some other family connexions, were expected from England; all the neighboring families were to attend, and all the tenants on both Carlington and Ballyrowan were to be feasted; and the splendor of the expected celebration, as nurse remarked, was the "talk of the counthry side—small blame to thim, the crathurs—whin had they seen the like iv id?"

"I should think not, indeed," said Miss Beauford; "the heiress of Carlington is not to be married every day, I presume."

While all was going on, nurse, as *prima-donna* in general, and mistress of the robes in particular, was at the very zenith of her honor and glory. All traces of the enmity between her and Miss Beauford, which had been gradually evaporating since the change in the good lady's manner to Dora, were now utterly swept away by the flood of this grand mutual interest. Long and frequent were their consultations, and many were the omens, and noted the dreams daily repeated to Miss Beauford, in delighted prognostication of the great good fortune awaiting her darling.

But the climax of the whole was, when Miss Beauford superintended the unpacking and arranging of the magnificent *trousseau* she had brought from London. The gowns, the bonnet, the jewels, and laces, were all of the most exquisite materials, and, to do the good lady justice, in the most perfect taste ; and never was prime minister more elate than was Miss Beauford with the applause that rewarded her exertions, as one costly and beautiful article of apparel after another was drawn out and exhibited to the beholder's admiring gaze.

"Well, thin, shure enough, ma'am dear, id's yerself that has the iligant taste," said nurse, as, assisted by Kathleen, she carefully laid aside, in readiness for the occasion, the beautiful marriage dress of costly lace over white satin, with the bridal veil of the same rich material. "Shure, id's fit to dress the queen (God bless her !) ye are ; but ye'd never a fairer bride to dress over green Ireland or England eider, wid a nobler prisince an' a more beautiful face nor me heart's darlin' ; an id's the pride iv the world she'll look on her weddin' day, plase God ; an' His marcy be about her now an' evermore, Amin."

"Indeed, it is very true, Mrs. O'Sullivan," said the delighted Miss Beauford ; "and there never was any one, as I am told by good authority, so much admired in London, considering how little she was seen, owing to the melancholy circumstances of her visit there, and to her presentation, and all that, being obliged to be delayed until after her marriage ; but it will take

place with even more *éclat*, fortunately, as Lady Fitzgerald. I must say, the name sounds very well, and suits the noble and elevated style of her beauty ; and though his rank is not so high as Lord Belmont's—and, no doubt, had she spent a season or two in London, she might have married higher even than an Earl—yet she never could have found any one so suited to make her happy as Sir Eustace, or whom she would have cared so much for ; and, to be sure, that is of great consequence, for wealth and rank can never make us happy without true affection ; and I always said they were made for each other. Not but what they will have plenty of this world's riches, too—for Ballyrowan is a fine property ; and that other place that Sir Eustace has in the north, I suppose is almost as productive, though not so beautiful ; and they probably will always reside either here or at Ballyrowan, with the variety of her occasional visit to London in the season—for it would be a great pity Dora should not be seen there ; and, for that matter, it would not do for a man of Sir Eustace's talent to be always buried in the country either—so all is well that ends well. But was there ever anything so horrible and frightful as the idea of Sir Eustace dying like some common felon upon the gallows ! I declare, it makes my blood run cold to think of it ; and when the terrible image comes across me, sometimes, if I awake in the night, I quite shudder with horror, only to think of it ! Poor Dora would certainly have died of a broken heart—to say nothing of his mother and sister, and of the disgrace it would have been to the old and honorable house of the Fitzgeralds. And only to think that Dora would have been a widow the day after her marriage, and all her life would have borne the stigma of her husband dying by the hands of an executioner—horrible to think of ! Not that I would ever have objected to anything that was a comfort to them, poor things ! But did you ever know anything so fortunate as the *dénouement* happening before the ceremony, instead of after it ? for only think what a dreadful thing it would have been, if the heiress of Carlington had

been married in the condemned cell of Newgate—(she had on a plaid gown, too, I remember, that night)—and then all her life to have been pointed out as the widow of the last of the Fitzgeralds, who was executed for murder! Whether he committed it or not, is altogether a different thing; but many people would have believed it. Not that the ladies in olden times were looked down upon for things of that sort. Many a border chieftain was hanged, and his widow only the more celebrated, and his memory held up as an example of brave deeds; but times are changed now-a-days."

"One thing I'll go bail for, ma'am agrah," said nurse;—"that the ould times nor the new times niver saw a grander weddin' than my darlint will have before she's a week oulder—(Heaven bless her!)—and shure, since the days of Noah, till now, never was seen a more beautiful bride."

"It is all true that you say, Mrs. O'Sullivan," said Miss Beauford, with much complacency; "but there I see Lady Delaney and her daughters coming up the avenue, and I must go to receive them."

She descended to the saloon, and nurse to Mrs. O'Riley's room, where she found an eager group waiting to receive her.

"Come away, Mrs. Sullivan, darlint," cried O'Brien, as she entered; "shure id's yerself has the hearts iv the quality, and well you desarve it; and I'm not the man that 'ud ask you to tell inything that was tould you on the sacrit like, but if you could just give us the least taste iv a know, whither the news that Lanty brought from Ballyrowan has inything in it at all? The Dane of A—— (a fine gintleman's that same) is for ivermore at Ballyrowan convarsin' Sir Eustace, and some say that he's to marry our lady—(God bless her!)—and some even says"—and here O'Brien lowered his voice to a whisper—"that id's hiritics they be turnin'—but I can't put any faith in id at all."

"Small blame to them if it war," said Mrs. O'Riley; "shure they've had plenty of the ould religion, and what for 'ud they not lave it, if they git a betther?"

"Thrue for ye, Mrs. Riley," replied O'Brien; "an' id's yersilf that spakes up, now that his rivirence is over the says."

"Shure, there was no raison to make a blathershin so long as it was of no good," says Mrs. O'Riley; "it was best to be kapin' quiet and aisy, and sarvin' our young lady—poor lamb! —that was sore handled amongst them—wid the best of the heart's blood; but my husband—(Heaven rest his soul!)—was a Protestant—for they don't be callin' thim hiritics in that uncivil manner north of the Shannon—and so were his people; and I've always had a lanin' to the new religion since ever he died. But take this aisy chair, Mrs. Sullivan, ma'am—it's bad manners of us to be talkin', and you better informed than all of us put together."

"I'll only say this," replied nurse, taking the seat assigned to her, "that Sir Eustace and me lady larned their religion from God's Bible, an' I wish we may all do the same; and whether id's Catholics or Protestants they be called, id's Christians they be, every inch of them—Heaven above be praised, that brought thim back in pace to reign over us!"

"Long may they reign over us!" resounded on all sides.

"Long life to them! and may they reign in honor and glory —shure id's all as one to us—id's God's truth they'll be tachin' us, and that's more than other fowks can say, I'm thinkin'. But now, Mrs. Sullivan, that we're quiet and aisy here, tell us all, from beginning to end, that tuke place since the day ye set foot in London."

Though the events that occurred there were already well-known to the eager group, they were now detailed more circumstantially, and many were the exclamations excited.

"Well, she was a quare woman, Mrs. Harris, intirely," said O'Brien, when poor Harris's untimely fate was related; "an' she's come to an ill end, the crathur'—the saints above have marcy on her!—but I'm thinkin' Father Adrien 'll not set his foot in ould Ireland or England either, till many a year's come *and gone.*"

"Shure you'd not be afther sayin' his rivirence did harm till her?" said Lanty.

"I'm afther sayin' nothin'," said O'Brien, sagaciously nodding his head; "laste said is soonest minded, and I can think my own think; but if he never laid hand on her, he druve her deminted, and then she laid hand on hersilf—was that much betther, think ye?"

"Many, many's the sorrowful time," said Mrs. O'Riley, after nurse's recital was finished, "that I lay here the dark night through, when his honor Sir Eustace (bad cess to his parsecutors!) was layin' where it was scorn to think his foot should tread—many's the night I lay thinkin' of the banshee that cried at Ballyrowan, and the flesh creeped on my bones whin I thought it was Sir Eustace she'd been wailin' over, and the terrible end they evened to the likes of him. Confusion on their heads! But that's past and gone now, Heaven be praised! only what think ye could the banshee mane?"

"We'd betther be houlding our whisht when we're spakin 'iv the likes iv that," said nurse mysteriously; "thim spirits iv the air have many a manin' that we mortials are slow iv radin'."

"Thrue for ye, ma'am intirely," said O'Brien; "shure the wisdom that's in you bates the world all over; isn't id a fine thing, boys and girls, to have the book-larnin'?"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"The Lord grant you that ye may find rest in the house of your husband."—RUTH.

THE eve of Dora's marriage-day arrived at last—Miss Beauford was all agitation—nurse in the height of her glory—the old Castle smiling in its festive garniture—Mrs. O'Riley deep in her culinary mysteries—and O'Brien rejoicing in the brilliancy

of salver and chandelier—and, in the midst of all, Dora was left alone.

Nurse had at last exhausted every device of affection, and, when about to leave the room, she came close to Dora, and bending down before her, and taking both her hands, pressed them fervently to her lips. "Heaven bless you! precious darlint of me ould heart," she said, while tears flowed down her aged cheeks, "and send ye a long and happy life. Shure I resaved ye in my arms, darlint, when first yer eyes opened on heaven's light, and the vein iv me heart have ye been ever since, chora machree; and never mother, in her darkest hour, suffered what I've done for yees, whin I seen thim wringin' the young life's-blood out iv you drop by drop, and had it only in my power to mourn—but all's past now, mavourneen, and the sun's shinin' bright over yer blissed head; so go forth and be happy and gay, an' I'll thank God, night and day, on my bended knees, that my dove is sheltered in a warm nest at last."

Dora's tears fell fast as the old woman spoke. "None can love me more truly than you do, nurse," she said, clasping her arms round the old woman's neck, and pressing her lips on her withered cheek; "and oh! when you are glad that your poor dove has rest, remember she had always a warm nest here, where many a time she found the shelter she had nowhere else on earth."

"The Almighty God look down from the heaven above, an' send ye blessin's thicker than the dew of a summer mornin', darlint iv me heart," said nurse, pressing her to her breast; "an' from this hour, as long as I live, the word ye have spoken will be the cordial iv me life—my blessin' on the lips that spoke id!"

Without trusting herself to another word or another look, the old woman hurried from the room, and Dora was left alone.

She sat down in the deep recess of the window that had often witnessed feelings so varied and intense, and gazed out on the same blue sea, the same changeless mountain, the same undulating lawn, shaded by old forest trees that so often her sad

heart had communed with in the dark days of old. The calm moonlight was sleeping on wood and dell, as it used to do then, and busy memory brought scene after scene of the past in vivid light before her. Suddenly a light breeze sprang up, and shook the tops of the tall trees. There was something in its sound that touched a chord of association, and the lonely night when she had parted from Sir Eustace, as she then believed for ever, in the wood of Ballinasloe, rose as a vision on her sight. She sank upon her knees, and wept. The first streak of dawn had appeared ere Dora sought a brief rest in sleep, it was very brief, for, ere the dew was up, she had risen and called Fidèle to accompany her in a last ramble on the sea-shore.

The sleepy dog raised his head from his cushion by his mistress's bed, and seemed to remonstrate against the sufficiency of two hour's repose ; but, seeing there was no hope of prolonging it, he slowly stretched out one foot after another, and shook himself, and at last stood prepared to sally forth.

"Ah, my dog," said Dora, fondly caressing his glossy head, "you have been my faithful companion for many a day, and you must not desert me now."

He looked up in her face with his bright sparkling eyes, and wagging his tail, uttered a low murmur of affection that seemed to promise eternal fidelity. They went forth together, and brushing the heavy dew off the grass as they hastened across the lawn, passed through Dora's favorite wood, and emerged from it on the silver sand of her own fairy bay.

There she sat long and stilly on the rocks, the glittering waves almost laving her feet, the gay fresh morning breeze lifting the ringlets from her cheek, and her eyes, as in days of yore, resting on the wide blue waters. That was Dora's last lonely haunt. As she drew near the Castle, she was met by nurse.

"The top iv this bright mornin', an' yer old nurse's blessin' on yer head, cushla machree," she said ; "an' see how the beautiful sun is shinin' on ye, darlint, bright as the days before ye, plase Heaven."

At this moment the white dove which on her birthday had flown wounded to her for refuge, and ever since had occupied a dove-cot near her window, perched upon her shoulder.

"See, there!" exclaimed nurse, clasping her hands in ecstasy; "good luck follows you, mavourneen grah!"

"Yes," said Dora, while she stroked the snowy plumage of her favorite; "you have been faithful to your promise, nurse, and your birdeen's wounds are healed."

Nurse's glory reached its culminating point when she had arrayed her darling in her bridal robes, and stood feasting her eyes and soul upon the lovely being round whom every fibre of her heart was entwined.

Miss Beauford had not been less busy at Dora's toilet; and so perfect was her satisfaction, that it seemed as if not the costly robes alone, but her who wore them, was the fruit of her labors, the *chef-d'œuvre* of her genius.

When nurse handed to her the bridal veil, which alone was wanting to complete Dora's dress, Miss Beauford took it, as if to put it on, then, after a moment's apparent deliberation, she returned it to nurse, saying—"No, Mrs. O'Sullivan, you have acted a mother's part to Miss Mowbray, and it is but right you should have a mother's privilege. Not but what I have done my best, I am sure"—and here the ready handkerchief was applied to her eyes—"and you know, Dora, love, you knew nothing of cross-stitch or tent-stitch till I taught you, and had never worked a sampler. Yes, I have done what I could in my poor way, and so I did to your mother before you, and I dressed her for her marriage with my own hands, for her own poor mother had died some years before; and nothing could look more lovely than she did, only her dress was by no means so tasteful as yours, for, as Madame D——— said to me, yours was 'fit for a princess of the blood; not but what I have made dresses as handsome,' she said, 'but it is the exquisite taste of this that makes it so unrivalled; and, if all I have heard of *Miss Mowbray* be true, she is well fitted to grace it.' Ah,

Dora, my love, you are so like your mother, I could fancy I saw her before me now! she was a lovely creature, and followed by admiration wherever she went. At her presentation there was no one, it was said, to be compared with her; but these things were all before your day, Dora, my love. Well, I am sure I am thankful there is nothing yellow to-day—no bad omens. No; this day is celebrated as the marriage of the heiress of Carlington ought to be; but it is well your part, Mrs. O'Sullivan, to put on her bridal veil."

She held the beautiful veil and wreath of fragrant orange blossoms towards nurse, who received them with a low courtesy, while tears of delight filled her eyes.

"My blissin' on ye, lady dear, for that same; an' a prouder woman ye've made me this day than if ye'd gifted me with all the lands between Carrickfergus an' Cork."

Lady Fitzgerald remained with Dora until after her toilet was completed, and, when folded to her tender bosom, Dora felt that a mother's love indeed was hers. No father or brother's hand there was to give the lonely Dora from their kindred guardianship to another's care. Lord Devereux was to hold for the day a father's place.

The faint color that tinged Dora's cheek forsook it as he entered to conduct her to the chapel, but she rose immediately, and calmly accepting his offered support, accompanied him, followed by Lady Fitzgerald and nurse; Miss Beauford was already in the chapel.

"I heartily rejoice in this happy consummation of all our troubles," said the good peer, as he led Dora along the corridor; "and I most sincerely wish that many years of happiness may make up for all you have suffered. I was always sure that Providence was too kind to allow the machinations of wicked people to prevail against the good and pious."

By her own desire, Cecilia was present in the chapel. Those who loved her would gladly have spared her a scene that recalled such bitter memories. She was perfectly calm through-

out the ceremony, but her pallid cheek and the quiver of her pale lips, told what she endured.

Lanty's news had not been baseless. The venerable Dean of A———, in his surplice and black skull-cap, from beneath which his snow-white locks clustered round his mild benignant brow, stood at the communion-table, from which the crucifix and altar-cloth had been removed; and before the marriage ceremony was performed, Sir Eustace and Dora, in the presence of the assembled crowd that filled the chapel, professed themselves Protestants. They then received the sacrament in the form of the Protestant Episcopal Church, from the hands of the venerable pastor. It was over—that seal of their eternal union to their Redeemer had been received—and they now stood prepared to pledge to each other the vows of a union upon which He had set the seal of immortality. In the hushed stillness around them, the clear full accents in which Sir Eustace uttered the vows that bound to himself for ever the being so long and fondly loved, reverberated through the chapel, and not less distinctly audible were the low-breathed tones of Dora's response.

The ceremony was nearly completed, when a sudden gust of wind burst open the door of the chapel. Dora started, and the blood rushed in a swift tide to her cheek, to desert it as swiftly. Sir Eustace pressed more closely the hand he held, while with his deep eyes bent upon her face, he repeated the words—"To have and to hold from this day forward—to love and to cherish till death us do part."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"A long war disturb'd your mind,
Here your perfect peace is sign'd;
'Tis now full tide, 'twixt night and day—
End your moan, and come away."

DUCHESS OF MALFY.

"Man, thou hast sped thine errand well, yet is it wasted breath,
Except the great ones of the earth can break my tryst with death.
A few brief days, or briefer hours, and I am going home
Unto mine own prepared place." . . . . . .

* * * * * *

I hear—I hear the chariot-wheels that bring my Saviour nigh;
For me He bears a golden crown—a harp of melody:
For me He opens wide His arms—He shows His wounded side:
Lord, 'tis my passport into life—I live, for Thou hast died!"

LAYS OF THE KIRK AND COVENANT.

A YEAR of repose had succeeded the tempests of Dora's stormy life, and spring again blossomed in the woods of Ballyrowan.

Cecilia's health had improved; she rarely alluded now to the forebodings of death that had once so strongly possessed her. In the sweet shelter of her home, and enjoying the society and happiness of those so dear to her, the impressions of former suffering appeared to be growing fainter, and some gleams of her spirit's youthful buoyancy seemed at times to return.

During this time Count Romilli's imprisonment had been protracted, but his trial came on early in spring; and Sir Eustace, nurse, and O'Gorman was summoned to London to attend it.

"You do not wish to accompany me, Dora?" said Sir Eus-

tace, when his departure was arranged. "I would rather leave you here, for we know not what shock, which we cannot avert, may fall upon Cecilia, and she and my mother will need your support."

It was so decided. Sir Eustace was absent for several weeks. It was a time of intense anxiety, and each despatch from him, as it arrived, augmented rather than decreased it. The Count was acquitted, from want of sufficient evidence to substantiate any of the charges against him. Dora now looked for Sir Eustace back, but he still delayed. She knew the cause too soon. Immediately upon his acquittal, Count Romilli had brought forward a charge against Sir Eustace, for falsely asserting him to be a priest, and thus unwarrantably depriving him of his wife and her fortune. To Dora only Sir Eustace confided this, and she gladly bore in his absence the weight of anxiety alone, since, by doing so, she could save, for a time at least, those so dear to her from its pressure.

When hope deferred had begun to make the heart sick, Dora sat one night alone in her room. Midnight had long passed, but she could not retire to rest, and lingered at the window, looking out on the clear, still, summer night. Suddenly her gaze was arrested by a figure in the balcony, in the same spot where she had seen it before. Too well she knew the bending posture, the veiled features, the long dark drapery. While her blood curdled with horror, it threw up its arms wildly, and that well-remembered cry rang, upon her ear and heart, the passing bell of hope.

Next day Sir Eustace arrived. One glance at his face was enough. Dora read there that Cecilia's doom was sealed. The testimony of Sir Eustace and nurse had been pronounced insufficient to convict the Count of perfidy, and his claim upon Cecilia was established. Cautiously and gently the truth was conveyed to Lady Fitzgerald. The mother's freshly-stricken heart bowed in submissive agony to this new trial, and committed *her darling* to His care who even now could save her.

"I can trust Him with my child," she said; "and I know He will shield her from a fate so dreadful. Ah! rather a thousand times would I see her in her grave!"

"I will perish," said Sir Eustace vehemently, "sooner than yield her to that man! Never more shall he see the face of the angel he has betrayed; but the law has given him power to claim her—we must therefore treat with the wretch for her liberty. Her fortune I will gladly resign to him, with a large increase, upon the condition that she is to reside with her family."

"God grant he may consent!" exclaimed Lady Fitzgerald, fervently; "but we must closely guard her, lest he should again attempt to wrest her from our protection."

"There is not, I think, much danger of his doing so until he has secured her fortune," said Sir Eustace; "and any unusual precautions would alarm her fears and injure her health. Should our negotiations fail, the most strict surveillance must then be preserved, and effectual measures taken to protect her. Meanwhile it is better that Cecilia should know nothing of the danger which threatens her. It would but disturb her peace."

But their anxious care was vain. Cecilia's perceptions were too spirit-like for the cloud that darkened the hearts of those so dear to escape her observation.

In the evening, after Sir Eustace's return, they sat together in the balcony. The day had been intensely hot, and Cecilia appeared fatigued and languid. She had sat for some time in silence, her lucid eyes fixed on her mother's face, with a gaze Lady Fitzgerald would fain have shunned. To turn it aside, she put her arm fondly round Cecilia, who was sitting on a low stool at her feet, and drew her head to rest upon her breast.

"Rest on me, my child," she said, as she smoothed her golden ringlets; you are weary with this summer heat. You must not, while these hot days last, ride as you have done to-day."

Cecilia clasped her mother's hand in hers, and pressed it to her lips; then raising her head, fixed again that spirit-glance upon her mother's face.

"I am not weary, dearest mother, though this resting-place is ever sweet to me—but tell me what has happened. Do not think a cloud can darken your spirits, beloved ones, and not overshadow mine—but you need not fear. I know that evil again has come upon me, and I am ready to bear it all."

It was indeed vain to deceive her; so, gently, tenderly, the truth was told. But the lightning shaft scathes not the young tree's bloom more swiftly than did that fatal news blight the gentle spirit that had already so nearly sunk beneath the storm.

"His wife!" she exclaimed, with a shriek of anguish that rang for many a day in the hearts of those who heard it; "oh, no! he has deceived, betrayed me; and now he will tear me from my home! But you will not let me go? Save me! save me!"

She clung to Sir Eustace in wild despair. He clasped her to his breast, and strove to soothe her, but in vain. An agony of terror had taken possession of her, and all that night they watched by her couch, while the fearful images of delirium tortured her spirit, until they feared the frail bark could not, for many hours longer, weather the tempest that had overtaken it. As often as slumber seemed stealing over her exhausted frame, she would start up again, aroused by some vision of horror.

"Save me!" she exclaimed; "he is dragging me away! Oh! Eustace, my guardian angel! you rescued me before. His horse is in the wood; a few moments, and we will be far from pursuit. Hasten—hasten! Oh! hold me fast!" Then, her tone changing to one of the most melancholy pathos, she said—"He bade me remember the days of our early love. Ah! Romilli, then I thought you true—I thought you my heaven-sent guide—but not long. It was not long, that dream of rapture, for you bade me deceive my mother. Do not look at me, mother. Turn away those loving eyes—I have deceived *you*. Oh! bid me not look up to the blue heavens—they are *no longer clear* to me." She paused a little; then continued,

in a lower tone—"Forsake you? ah! never! He is my husband; and oh! I love him through all!" She lay quiet for some time, then suddenly starting up in bed, shrieked, in a tone of fearful agony—"Not his wife! oh! betrayed! betrayed!"

She sank back on her pillow, and fell into a heavy stupor, which, after a time, assumed the character of sleep, and the anxious watchers dared to hope that the crisis was past. Lady Fitzgerald persuaded all to retire to rest, and leave her alone by the couch of her child. The soft light of the dawn was stealing into the room, and the low songs of the birds awaking, and still Cecilia slept. Her rest at first had been disturbed; now, it was calm as an infant's. At last she opened her eyes, and looked on her mother, while a bright smile irradiated her pale features.

"Do you hear that music, mother?" she said.

"I hear only the songs of the birds, my child," said Lady Fitzgerald, while she bent over her, and tenderly kissed her fair brow.

"It is sent to comfort me," said Cecilia softly; and clasping her hands upon her breast, she remained long silent, as if her soul were drinking in the spirit-melody that floated around her. At last she breathed a deep sigh of rapture, and, turning to her mother, said, "It is gone now, but it will come again. I had begun to think I was deceived.—Mother," she continued, after a pause, "so long a time had passed, and I was getting so well, that I began to think it was only the breezes God sent from the land of peace to revive me in my sorrow, that had borne on their wings the melodies of the yet distant shore I thought I had so nearly reached. But now I know I was not mistaken, and that the billows are nearly passed. I shall not be given up; sooner than that, my Father will take me swiftly to my heavenly home; so take your child to your bosom, mother, and rejoice that she is safe."—And the mother took her child to her bosom, and gave God thanks; for she, too, believed that she was safe.

"Kiss me now, mother," she said, after a short pause; "kiss your child, and forgive her for all the grief she has wrought you. I have been a sorrowful child to you, mother, but it is all over now; and if it is permitted me, I will be your guardian angel till you come to me in our Father's house. I will be near you in your path by day, and watch by you in the silent night, and will whisper sweet dreams to your spirit, and tell you that I love you still."

Lady Fitzgerald spoke not—a mother's anguish was swelling high in her breast—but she pressed many a fervent kiss on the fair brow of her child, while she strove to still in her bursting heart the grief that would have broken her repose.

Cecilia looked wistfully in her face. "You must not mourn that I leave you, dearest mother. Think from what a dreadful fate my Father in heaven is saving me. And when your heart yearns for your child, even though you know she is at rest in her heavenly home, oh! then remember what it would have been to mourn her had she been riven from your arms to be plunged in a living gulf of ruin and despair!—Now tell me you forgive me," she continued, after a short silence; "I cannot go in peace till you forgive and bless me."

"The blessing of God our Saviour rest upon thee, my child, said Lady Fitzgerald fervently; "most fully, most freely, do I forgive the errors into which you fell. Until that fatal time, my child, you never grieved your mother's heart. Forgive me, that I did not better guard my treasure."

"No; you were not to blame, mother. Alas! you trusted me." She stopped, and appeared for a few moments overcome with the bitterness of remembrance; at last, with restored calmness, she continued—"I know that the Lord Jesus Christ, my Saviour, has forgiven my sins. This is my peace, and in Him alone I trust. If Romilli comes to claim me, and finds me not, tell him this, and say that I prayed for him—that no night did sleep close my eyes until I had committed him to God—no *morning light* arose without my prayer ascending to the Father

of our spirits, that He would give him everlasting life. Tell him I forgive him all, and that I charge him to flee from the wrath of God, to repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then I will meet him in heaven, and love him once again. Yes ; in heaven I may love him—all is true there."

She lay for some time silent, and gradually sunk into a calm sleep ; when she awoke, about an hour afterwards, the bright sun was pouring his warm beams into the room.

"I will rise, mother," she said, "and go out to breathe the sweet air of my own fields and woods."

Lady Fitzgerald feared she overrated her strength, but she was soon satisfied that her apprehensions, on this point at least, were groundless. Cecilia was paler than the day before, and her fragile frame seemed to have been shattered by an earthquake shock, but she was calm and tranquil, while a strength, either real or apparent, bore her up against the effects of her brief but alarming illness. Again her mother's heart beat high with hope—others hardly feared. Brightly the hours of that long quiet day flowed on—they passed. As evening approached, Cecilia appeared to revive. The pallor passed from her features and the languor from her step. A faint rose-tint glowed in her cheek, and her eyes beamed with the light of hope and joy. The brightness of her spirit reflected its light upon those around her, and they again ventured to anticipate the time when the claims of Count Romilli would be finally resigned, and she, left undisturbed in the bosom of her family, would at last regain her peace, and her life flow on in calm tranquillity, if it never might smile so joyously as its opening morn had promised.

"Well, I'm sure, she's more like an angel than anything else," said Miss Beauford, as she joined Dora in the saloon, after a visit to Cecilia's room ; "and it really makes one quite sad, and at the same time does one good, Dora, my love, to see so young and beautiful a creature, so pure and ethereal, and so full of heavenly wisdom, quite superior to the trials of this life ! I

knew the Church Catechism by heart, Dora, my dear, before I was five years old, and never missed being at church on a fast or a feast-day, in my life, except once for six weeks, when I had sprained my ankle; and yet, I am sure, if any horrid Count threatened to carry me off whether I would or not, I would be ready to go out of my senses; and poor Cecilia is so calm and so full of resignation, and places her trust so entirely in God, it is really very edifying, though one cannot help feeling sad;" and here the good lady had recourse to her handkerchief. "If she had continued in the Romish Church, there is no doubt she would have been canonized, though, to be sure, it is far better to be a true Christian, and that is what I hope God will teach us all to be, though, indeed, I think every one but myself is so already; and indeed, when I see so much goodness and piety around me, I feel quite overcome; but then, you know, my love, it would be very wrong if I were to distrust God, if we seek His mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ; and, I am sure, He has been so good to me through my long life, it would be very wicked of me to distrust Him now, and I thank Him every day for appointing my lot where I see a constant example of virtue and piety; but really, my love, I wish there was no such thing as the Catholic Church in the world. Only think what misery it has brought on us all!—and now, if this horrid man will not give up Cecilia!——but we will not think of that, it is too dreadful, and, I trust, all will go well yet. To be sure, poor Lord Belmont is married, and if he were free, of course Cecilia could not marry him. It is something, to be sure, that she is, to all intents and purposes, a Countess in the eyes of the world; but then, what does that signify, if she is not happy? I am sure it was a great pity she ever went to France; such a happy, guileless thing she was before she went there"—and the good lady again wiped away tears of real feeling. "There is no place like it, certainly, for the refinement of polite life, for dress, and *trousseaux*, and all that sort of thing; but then I do

not see that it is good for anything else, and, above all, let no one go there for morals or religion."

The day wore on. Lady Fitzgerald never left her darling's side, she knew not why, for Cecilia appeared very well, and her spirit tranquil as the summer sea.

"Let me go, dearest mother," she said, when the glorious sun began to sink behind the woods of Ballyrowan; "let me go to my own tree, and watch the sunset from thence. I would see its parting gleam on my own bright sea."

They went. It was a spreading lime-tree, at the skirts of the wood behind the house. The hill rose there abrupt and steep; and from this spot there was a wide-spread view of hill and dale and wood, with the sparkling ocean stretching its waters beyond.

Here a rustic seat had been made for Cecilia, and here, as a happy child, she had loved to wreath the gayest wild-flowers, and look for fairy rings upon the emerald grass. Here, in later days, she had lingered many a dreamlike hour, filled with visions not less beautiful; and here, when the days of earthly hope were gone, she had blessed God that there shone for her the sunlight of a fairer heritage, where no blight can ever come. Here now she reposed. All she loved were around her. The soft air, laden with the perfume of fragrant lime blossoms, fanned her brow, and the golden sunlight flooded hill and valley with its beams, and sparkled, many-gemmed, on the radiant sea. She long reclined in silence, her dreamy eyes resting on the fairy scenes of her own loved home, her hand clasped in her mother's. A look of intense repose was on her face. Suddenly it brightened into ecstasy—"Mother, do you hear? It is come! it is come!" She continued wrapt in that mysterious ecstasy—her soul absorbed in the celestial sounds that floated around her. Her hands were clasped on her bosom, her eyes gazing dreamily into space. All were still, their gaze riveted on that beautiful face now radiant with a more than mortal light.

At this moment a low rustling was heard amongst the trees, and Count Romilli stood before them.

"I have come to claim you, my bride," he said in a tone of soft blandishment, attempting, as he spoke, to take Cecilia's hand; "my arrival cannot have been unexpected."

Sir Eustace haughtily interposed.

"This is no time nor place for such discussion, Count Romilli," he said. "Will you do me the favor to retire with me, where we may more fittingly arrange this matter?"

Cecilia's gaze was turned upon him. Her cheek had not paled nor her eye changed when he appeared.

"I knew it would be so," she murmured inwardly.

Her gaze followed him as he retired. Lady Fitzgerald strove to persuade her to return to the house, but Cecilia only answered—

"Let me stay here, mother; let me stay."

Her mother could not resist the gently-pleading look, and they stayed. She hoped Sir Eustace would persuade Count Romilli to depart without again disturbing Cecilia. The hope was vain. In a few moments they returned. A smothered fire was in Sir Eustace's eye. Count Romilli was all calm and bland.

"Sir Eustace has been urging me," he said, "to forego my claim to your hand, Cecilia. He little knows how dear is the privilege I have come here to assert. Are you ready, my beloved wife, to accompany me now? My carriage waits, and every comfort is provided for your journey."

He drew near and took her hand.

"She shall not!" exclaimed Sir Eustace fiercely, throwing himself between them. "Sooner will I see her in her grave!"

"By heaven, she shall!" exclaimed the Count furiously; and grasping her hand more firmly, he endeavored to seize her, but Sir Eustace's strong arm held him at bay.

"It needs not, tender and faithful brother," said Cecilia *calmly*; "my freedom is sealed above."

She raised her eyes to the deep blue heavens, while a light of ineffable brilliancy diffused itself over her face.

"I come, my Father!" she exclaimed; I come to Thee!"

The glow faded, the soft eye closed, and her head sank gently upon her mother's breast. Count Romilli held a dead bride.

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Years have passed since then, and softened in their flight the grief that mourned the lost one.

Count Romilli received the whole of Cecilia's fortune, but he did not dispute with those who loved her so fondly the possession of her tomb.

Undisturbed by the violence that would have torn her from her home, she rests among the green woods of her own Ballyrowan. A monument of purest marble, placed amidst the escutchions of her warrior ancestry, marks the place of her repose. Engraved upon it are the words—"CECILIA, COUNTESS DI ROMILLI, WHO DIED ————, AGED 19.

Her sad story and early fate are preserved in the records of her house, and often breathed in hall or cot, where from infancy she was ever welcomed as a vision of light.

Her troubled path and early doom, her beauty and spirit life, have thrown a mysterious charm around her memory, and her name is never breathed but in the tender cadence of mingled veneration and regret.

Among the true-hearted though superstitious people of her dear native land, it is still believed that her spirit haunts the scenes of her bright childhood and early fate; and the laborer, when he returns from his work at eve, looks wistfully yet fearfully into the deep green woods, almost expecting to meet, in their shade, the pale features and mournful smile of "the White Lady of Ballyrowan."

Dora has "found rest in the house of her husband;" and in comforting the sorrowful, succoring the distressed, and shedding the pure light of God's truth over the moral wilderness where

darkness and superstition so lately reigned, she finds abundant reason to thank God that she has "borne the yoke in her youth," and thus learned a deeper knowledge of the human heart in its varied phases than the child of prosperity can eve. attain.

Sir Eustace and Dora are almost idolized by their people, whose only consolation, during their occasional absence from home, is, that "the Dowager Lady—Heaven bless her !—is in id intirely ; good luck to her for that same." And a placid smile has again dawned upon her matron brow, since like Naomi, she received the child of her Ruth to her bosom, and recognized, in the blue eyes and golden ringlets of the infant, the lineaments of her lost treasure. While she gazes on the bright smile, yet unclouded, that seems restored to her from the spirit land, and rejoices in the guileless love that from earliest infancy has clung to her with more than childlike intensity, many a fervent prayer is breathed from the depths of her heart, that the babe may be sheltered from the storms that wrecked the life of her lovely namesake.

Miss Beauford's desires have been fully satisfied by the *éclat* of Dora's presentation, and the admiration she had met with in London ; and she has now quite decided that even Lady Devereux's glowing descriptions of her triumphs do not compensate for her absence from home.

The venerable lady generally resides at Ballyrowan, but occasionally holds court at Carlington, where she keeps up all the state and ceremony of the olden time.

Sir Eustace and Dora observe these rules to her entire satisfaction, and the only person privileged to transgress them with impunity is her infant great-grand niece. "To be sure," Miss Beauford often observes, "it is quite proper to teach young people submission to their elders, and to be neat, and orderly, and obedient ; and I highly approve of proper discipline being always maintained ; but there is really no occasion to teach *Cecilia to* be good and docile, for she is never otherwise. She

repeats the Catechism, too, better than most young people three times her age, and her sampler is a perfect miracle for a child of four years old."

One other member of the household Miss Beauford has absolutely failed in conforming to her ideal of a model waiting woman; but still, she says, "as Kathleen is so faithful and attached, poor thing, and really has a great deal of cleverness, about her, and is very neat-handed, I never could think of parting with her, and no doubt she will learn in time." From such distant prospect of improvement, however, Kathleen was emancipated a few months ago by her marriage with O'Brien, who, as she observes, "though no doubt he might be her fader an' more, yet he's always had the warm heart to her from a child, God bless him! an' if she'd be after turnin' the house out iv the windows, shure he'd niver say she did wrong, nor 'Kathleen, mavourneen, what 'ud ye be afther?' To be shure, her ladyship, Miss Beauford, 'ud be always tellin' her id was a bad thing for young girls to have all their own way, yet id's a mighty pleasant thing intirely to have a taste iv id, afther all."

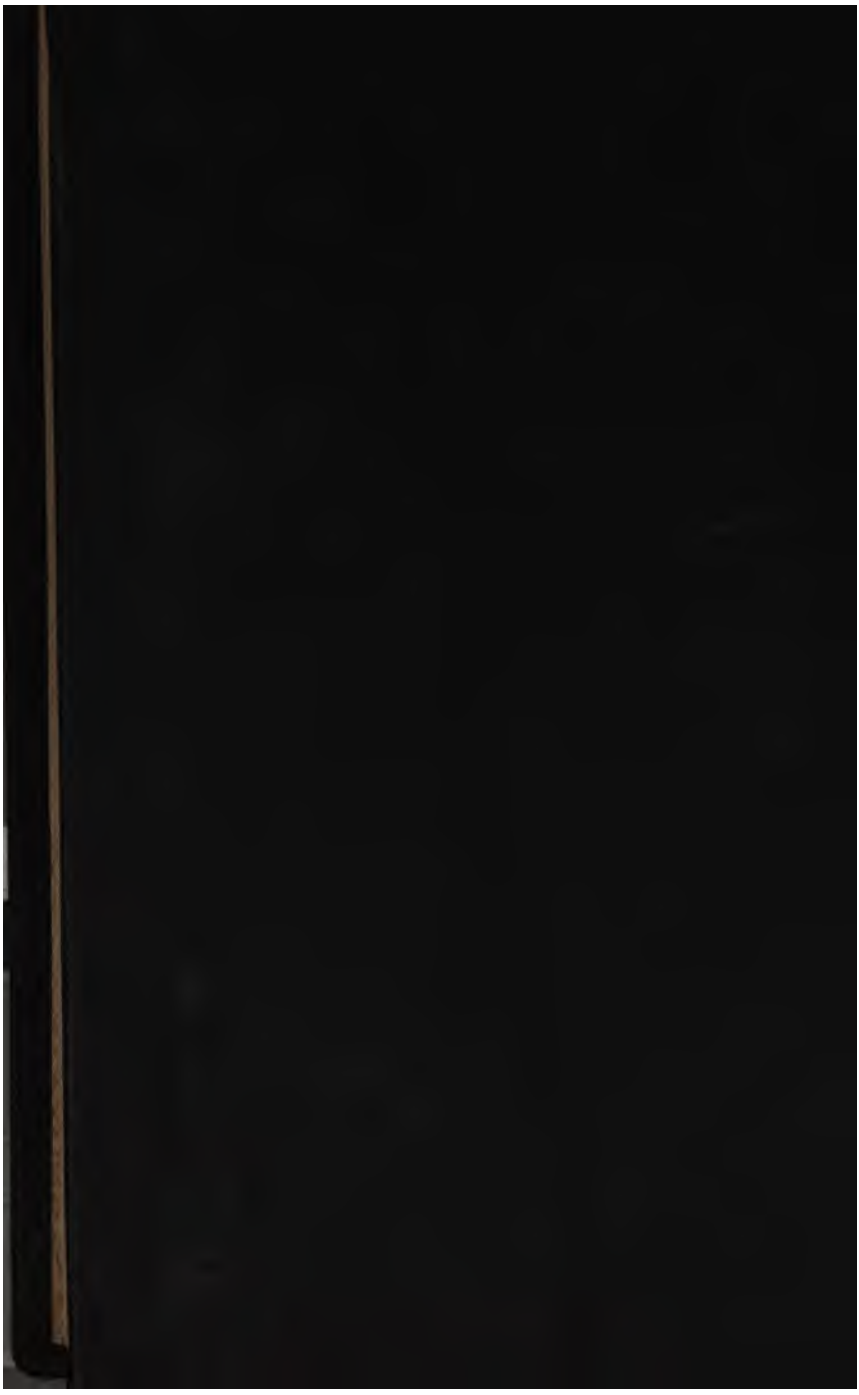
The best chair in her pretty rose-covered cottage is always wiped from invisible specks of dust, and placed for Miss Beauford, when the venerable lady, not unfrequently, honors her with a visit, and the courtesy that accompanies her "God save ye kindly, ma'am dear!" proves that Kathleen's "edicatin'" in the mysteries of polite life has not been altogether thrown away.

In all the dignity of black satin and pomp of arm-chair and footstool, Mrs. O'Sullivan presides over the nursery. Her sole employments are to issue directions to her subordinates, and to fondle and spoil, to the utmost extent of which his tender age is capable, the infant heir of the Fitzgeralds.

"The prince iv the world he is, shure enough, God bliss him! an' the king iv hearts from Ballyrowan to Cork, an' good right he has to be that same. Shure, isn't he his mother's own child, the darlint, wid her noble presence an' her starry smile,

an' the eagle eye iv Sir Eustace? Small blame to him for takin' the simblance iv thim that owns him, the beauty."

"It is all very true that you say, Mrs. O'Sullivan," said Miss Beauford. "He certainly is a most beautiful child, and very like both his parents, and, to be sure, Lady Fitzgerald has a queenly grace and a dignity of deportment that I never saw before in one so young. She is really quite like a lady of the olden time, and many a lance would have been broken for her, had she lived in the days of chivalry. She is certainly well fitted to grace the halls of her ancestors, and so is Sir Eustace. I often think, when I look at him, what a splendid figure he would have made leading a host of the Crusaders against the Saracens; but, to be sure, had he lived then, he could not have been Dora's husband now, and I do not see where she could have met with any one else to suit her in these degenerate days. I always said, as you may remember, Mrs. O'Sullivan, that they were made for each other."

"Thrue for ye, ma'am dear," said nurse; "id's the rale thrue word ye're spakin'; an' war you to sarch the wide world through, you'd niver see the like's iv thim, nader in ould Ireland nor over the wide says."

THE END.